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M E M O I R S

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OF THE REIGN OF

of the

BOSSAHADÉE,

of the

KING OF DAHOMY,

of the

&c. &c.

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M E M O I R S

OF THE REIGN OF

B O S S A A H A D E E,

KING OF DAHOMY,

An INLAND COUNTRY of GUINEY.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

THE AUTHOR'S JOURNEY

To *ABOMEY*, THE CAPITAL;

AND

A SHORT ACCOUNT

Of the AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE.

By ROBERT NORRIS. K

ILLUSTRATED WITH A NEW MAP.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR W. LOWNDES, No. 77, FLEET-STREET.

M.DCC.LXXXIX.

M. E. M. O. I. R. S.

OF THE REIGN OF

ROBERT A. H. D. E.

KING OF DANOM.

A. H. D. E. S. C. E. N. T. A. C. H. I. E.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

THE AUTHOR'S JOURNAL.

TO ROBERT A. H. D. E.

A. D.

A. H. D. E. S. C. E. N. T. A. C. H. I. E.

OF THE REIGN OF DANOM.

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BY ROBERT A. H. D. E.

IN LONDON WITH A. H. D. E.



PRINTED FOR H. M. S. O.

*Extract of a Letter from the Author
to the Editor.*

“ I Wish the manuscript which you have been at the trouble of perusing, were more deserving of the public attention ; but the fact is, that amidst the indispensable avocations of business, one has very little time, during an occasional residence in *Africa*, to bestow attention upon the history, either natural or political, of that country ; and the stupidity of the natives is an insuperable barrier against the inquirer's information.

After your pressing intreaties, I cannot withhold my consent to its being printed ; and although I have no ambition for *my name* to appear, yet, if you judge it at all necessary, to *establish the credibility of the facts related*, you are at liberty to make what use you please of it.

I could not easily avoid, in my narrative, the terms *king, general, palace*, and the like, and be intelligible to the *English* reader. For example: what I call *palace*,

is, in the language of the country, *simbony*; which (literally translated) means, a *big house*. This might have sounded awkwardly, and I have therefore adopted the corresponding term most familiar to an *English* ear. When these terms occur, it must not be forgotten, that they are by no means intended to convey the same ideas, which are usually annexed to them in civilized societies of mankind: and, for the reasons just alleged, I may hope it will be deemed a very excusable burlesque, to dignify a brutal barbarian with the title of *king*; or his place of habitation (which is little superior to a dog-kennel) with the splendid name of a *palace*.

Atkins, who saw the *palace* of the king of *Whydah* before it was destroyed, describes it as “a dirty, large, “bamboo building, of a mile or two in circumference; “where he kept a *thousand* concubines, and divided his “time between eating and lust.” This description, I venture to believe, is very suitable to all or most of the rest.

The royal *simbony*, or great house at *Calmina*, is surrounded by a mud wall, about twenty feet high; the ground it occupies is nearly a square; each side of which is little short of a mile in extent; for I found the two sides which I measured, each sixteen hundred of
my

my paces in length. In the centre of each side was a large building, in which a guard of women and eunuchs under arms was posted. On the roofs, which were of thatch, were ranged, on small-wooden stakes, a great many *human skulls* of prisoners taken in war. The inner apartments, which I had an opportunity of seeing, were only several large courts, communicating with each other; generally square, or oblong, encompassed by mud walls. In each of them was a piazza, or shed, formed with posts about seven feet high, and planted in the ground at the distance of about twelve or fourteen feet from the wall: the intermediate space was covered with a slanting thatched roof, supported on bamboo rafters, resting upon the posts, and reaching to the top of the wall, which, in this part, was in general about twenty feet high, but only eight or ten feet on the other sides of the court. The area of these courts was of the common soil of the country; but beneath the sheds the ground was elevated a few inches by a bed of clayey mortar, which formed the floor; and the wall was in some parts white-washed with a species of pipe-clay which the country produces. The whole had somewhat the resemblance of an assemblage of farm-yards, with long thatched barns, hovels for cattle and carts,

and low mud walls to separate them from each other. The interior of a Negrish palace is not so easy to be described. Its recesses are never entered by any human being of the male gender; and the female apartments are guarded from intrusion, with more than *eastern* jealousy. I never passed the limits of the courts before mentioned, except once at *Abomey*, when the old king *Abadee* was sick, and would see me in his bed-chamber, which was a detached circular room, of about eighteen feet diameter; it had a thatched, conical roof; the walls were of mud, and white-washed within; there was a small area before it, formed by a wall about three feet high, the top of which was stuck full of *human jaw bones*, and the path leading to the door was paved with *human skulls*. The mattress and bedstead were of *European* manufacture, with check curtains; the furniture of the room consisted of a small table, a chest, and two or three chairs; and the clay floor was covered with a carpet, which I had sold to him some few months before. The apartments for the women (each of whom have separate huts) occupy, I believe, the remainder of the space within the palace walls; except a small part appropriated to the eunuchs, and to some necessary store-houses, for holding the provisions

of

of his numerous family, as well as for his *couriers*, iron bars, clothes, arms, ammunition, &c. and for some articles of *European* furniture. The late king was very desirous of buying any article of this sort that he could procure; such as tables, chairs, bureaux, mahogany liquor-cases, walking canes, cases of knives and forks, and spoons, silver cups, and glass ware. I once brought him a two-handled silver cup and cover, of chased work, weighing *two hundred and twenty-six* ounces. I have sometimes dined in the piazzas, or sheds, before mentioned, and sometimes in the open area of some of the courts: on the latter occasions, the table, &c. were screened from the sun by large umbrellas held up by attendants, clothed in the country dress; which (for the men) in *Dahomy*, consists of a pair of wide drawers, and a piece of cloth of about three yards long, and two broad, worn loosely round the body, in such a manner as to leave the right arm free, and bare. I found no deficiency of table apparatus, and the king has always a succession of cooks trained up in the *European* forts at *Whydah*, so that he is able to treat his visitors with victuals dressed after their own country manner. My repasts used to be served up in plates, and dishes of pewter and earthen ware. I should remark,

that

that although the *tue-twee* and *dog's flesh* are highly relished by the natives, the king's *European* guests are never disgusted by the introduction of either.

I do not think the *Dahomans* are *Anthropophagists*, in the full sense of that word; though they scruple not to eat a devoted victim at the public festivals; and yet reproach their own countrymen, the natives of *Toree*, with *Canabalism*, of which, I own, I am not inclined to believe them guilty. But, that other *African* nations are addicted to that unnatural practice, I have not the smallest doubt; because, from the concurrent and credible testimony of those who have been at *Bonny*, it is well known that a *Bonny* man kills and eats an *Audony* man; and an *Audony* man treats a *Bonny* man in the same way, whenever he has an opportunity: I mean, as a familiar repast, and not merely in savage triumph after a victory. *Snelgrave* is certainly correct, and *Atkins* ill-informed and erroneous, respecting the *Daboman* king's motive for invading *Whydah*. I knew many of the old *Whydahians* as well as *Dahomans* who were present when *Trudo* attacked that kingdom. They attributed his enterprize solely to the desire of extending his dominions, and of enjoying at the first hand, those commodities which he had been used to purchase of
the

the *Whydahians*, who were in possession of the coast. *Trudo* had solicited permission from the king of *Whydah* to enjoy a free commercial passage through his country to the sea side, on condition of paying the usual *customs* upon *slaves* exported; this was peremptorily refused by the king of *Whydah*; and in consequence of this refusal, *Trudo* determined to obtain his purpose by force of arms: he succeeded in the attempt, and exterminated a great part of the inhabitants.

His conquest of the adjoining kingdom of *Ardra* facilitated the acquisition of the other. *Ardra* was once a powerful and populous nation, whose sovereignty extended from the river *Volta*, to the *Lagos*; but having afterwards been weakened by the revolts of *Quitta* (called by *Bosman*, *Coto*), and of *Popoe*, *Whydah*, *Appee*, *Bidagry*, and *Lagos*, it became incapable of opposing the victorious arms of *Trudo*. *Whydah*, whose king had imprudently declined to lend any assistance against the common enemy, soon fell a very easy conquest, and with it, the tributary port and province of *Jacquiu*. This restless barbarian, after glutting his vengeance with carnage, and the desolation of every maritime state which he was able to reduce, turned his sword against those inland kingdoms which had hitherto withstood his attacks.

attacks. But meeting unexpectedly with a severe repulse, his ferocity was redoubled by the disgrace, and he sought to gratify it, by committing fresh outrages, in the countries he had conquered. The arts of peace, the encouragement of agriculture, the introduction of profitable manufactures, and the promoting a civilized commerce with *European* traders, by an interchange of the native products of the most fertile spot in *Guinea*, were improvements, of which he does not appear to have ever formed the smallest idea; and of which his mind was probably not susceptible. His pretended letter to his "*Brother*" *George II.* the monarch of *Great Britain*, is now known to have been an impudent forgery of one *Bullfinch Lambe*, who made his way with it to the Duke of *Chandos*, at that time the great patron of the British trade to *Africa*.

The policy of *Trudo* was that of an ambitious and brutal savage, who sought to retain the territories he had acquired, by the expedient of firing the towns, and slaughtering the inhabitants; and in these exploits he employed some of the last years of his life, which ended in 1732. The sovereignty devolved to *Bassa Abadee*, whose Memoirs I relate, and now with the utmost humility submit to the candor of the public."

R. N.

INTRODUCTION.

THE *Dabomans*, a powerful and war-like nation of *Africa*, who live to the eastward of the *Gold Coast*, between the rivers *Volta* and *Benin*, have not escaped the notice of modern geographers; whose attention they engaged, by extending their dominions to the sea coast, and annexing to them, by conquest, the kingdom of *Whydah*; a country so respectable for its trade, that the English, French and Portuguese maintain forts there for the protection of their respective shares of it.

The *Dabomans*, but little more than a century ago, were an inconsiderable nation; formidable however to their neighbours, for their valour and military skill: they were then known by the

the name of *Foys*; and the town of *Dawbee*, which lies between *Calmina* and *Abomey*, was the capital of their small territory.

Early in the last century, *Tacoodonou*, chief of the *Foy* nation, basely murdered, in violation of the sacred laws of hospitality, a sovereign prince his neighbour, who made him a friendly visit to honor one of his festivals: he then attacked and took *Calmina*, the capital of the deceased: strengthened by this acquisition, he ventured to wage war with *Da*, king of *Abomey*, whom he besieged in his capital, which he soon reduced; and in consequence of a vow, that he made during the siege, put *Da* to death, by cutting open his belly; and placed his body under the foundation of a palace that he built in *Abomey*, as a memorial of his victory; which he called *Da-homy*, from *Da* the unfortunate victim, and *Homy* his belly: that is, a house built in *Da's* belly.

Tacoodonou

Tacoodonou after this conquest fixed his residence at *Abomey*, and assumed the title of *King of Dabomy*; of which the cruel circumstance just mentioned gives the true etymology; and from thence also the *Foys*, his subjects, are generally called *Dabomans*: in the country indeed the old name of *Foys* prevails; but to Europeans, I believe, they are only known by the name of *Dabomans*.

Thus *Tacoodonou* established the *Daboman* empire, which about a century afterwards his illustrious descendant *Guadja Trudo* aggrandized, by subduing various kingdoms, and adding *Whydah* to his dominions, in the year 1727; the conquest of which is particularly related by *Snelgrave*, *Atkins* and others.

Having premised this to the following account, which I have attempted to draw up, of the reign of *Bossa Abadee*, late king

king of *Dabomy*, I shall conclude with a list of the kings of that country:

Tacoodonou conquered *Abamey*, and founded the *Daboman* empire, about the year 1625.

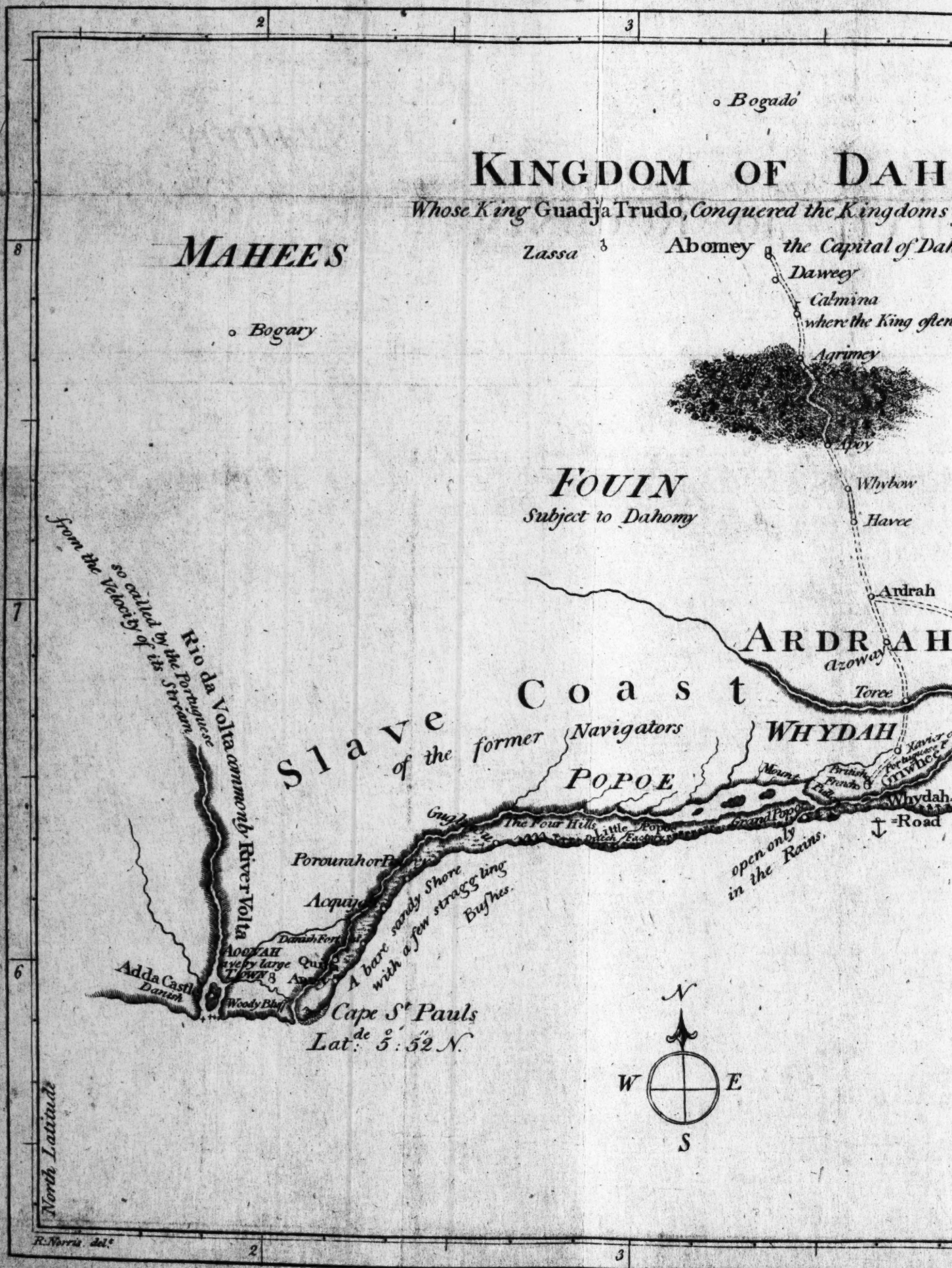
Adaunzou I. began his reign in 1650.

Vibagee, in 1680.

Guadjia Trudo (who conquered *Ar-dra*, *Whydab*, and *Jacquin*), in 1708.

Bossa Abadee, in 1732.

Adaunzou II. the present king, in 1774.



4
AHOMY

Kingdoms of Ardrah and Whydah in 1727.

at of Dahomy

King often Resides

bybow

lavce

Ardrah

AH

Ajirrah

Wemey

Ardrah

a Place of Great Trade

Badagry

Wacca

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AYOES
or
EYOES

a warlike people

JABOO

Kingdom of Lagos
which is tributary to
Benin.

Cradoo

Cradoo Lake

Lagos

River Lagos

BIGHT of BENIN

Scale of 60 Miles to a

5 10 20 30

Degrees of Longitude East from Greenwich

Published March 16th 1789 by W. Lowndes N^o 77 Fleet Street.

AYOE'S
or
EYOE'S

a warlike people

and Whydah in 1727.

JABO



BIGHT of BENIN

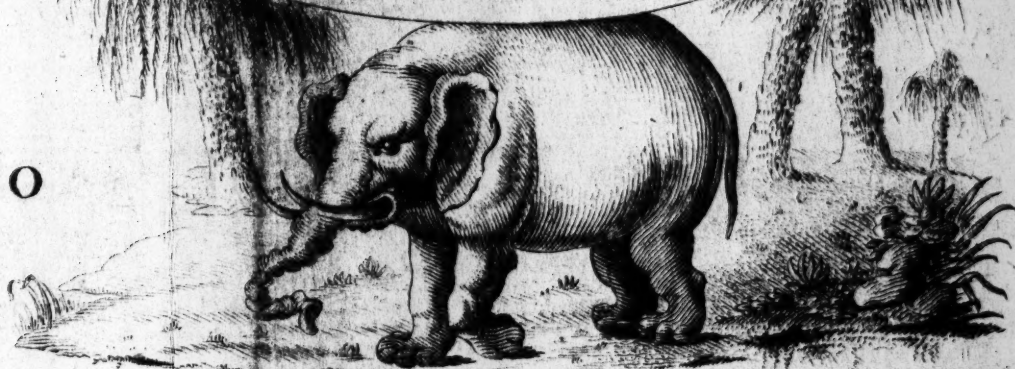
Scale of 69 $\frac{1}{2}$ Miles to
5 10 20 30

Degrees of Longitude East from Greenwich

Published March 16th 1789. by W. Lowndes N^o 77. Fleet Street.

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A MAP
of the
SLAVE COAST
 comprehended between the
RIVER VOLTA and BENIN
 with CAPE LAGOS.



KINGDOM OF BENIN



M E M O I R S

OF THE REIGN OF

B O S S A A H A D E E,

K I N G O F D A H O M Y.

Written in the Year 1773.

C H A P. I.

BOSSA AHADÉE succeeded his father
Guadja Trudo in his hereditary kingdom
of *Dabomy*, and also in the possession of those
numerous and extensive acquisitions obtained
by the victorious forces of that successful
tyrant;—the valuable kingdoms of *Ardrab*
and *Whydah*, together with *Toree*, *Didouma*,
Ajirrab and *Jacquín*, towards the sea; be-
sides several states inland bordering upon
B *Dabomy*;

Dabomy ; as *Povey*, which he assigned for the patrimony of the heir-apparent, and others, whose names I am not acquainted with. All these, *Trudo* conquered, and lived to see effectually enslaved to his domination.

By *Trudo's* management (in tolerating his new subjects with the free exercise of their various superstitions ; and incorporating them with the *Dabomans* by intermarriage if it may be so called), no distinctions being made between the conquerors and conquered, who were now become one people, many of those who had fled their native countries, to avoid the calamities of war, were induced to return and submit quietly to his government ; by which means, every part of his dominions became replenished with people, and so devoted was their submission, that none of the conquered states have to this day made any efforts to regain their independence.

Such was the situation of affairs, when *Trudo*, full of years, paid the debt of nature. His memory is still dear to the *Dabomans*, and in matters of great importance it is customary with them to swear by his name, as the
most

most sacred of all imprecations. His numerous conquests testify him to have been a great warrior; and that he was courteous, as well as intrepid, appears from his reply to the governors of the French, English, and Portuguese forts in *Whydab*, who applied to him, on his conquest of that country, for an abatement of the duties which had been exacted by the former sovereigns from the European shipping trading there. "As a mark of my esteem, said he, I will use you as an old man does his young bride, to whom he can refuse nothing; it shall be as you require, I remit you one half of the duties for ever."

As it is criminal in the natives of this country to discourse on politics, or to make any remarks upon the administration of public affairs, it is difficult to acquire any extensive knowledge of facts; and the little information which can be obtained, is but imperfect: the remembrance of the most interesting occurrences generally dies with those concerned in them. Fathers have not here an opportunity of relating to their children a detail of what they have seen or done:

the children belong to the state, or rather are the property of the king, to whom they are sent at too tender an age to recollect any thing of their parents. The old soldier dares not shew his scars and fight his battles over a bottle here ; however, during a long residence, I have picked up the following memoirs among them : which I have arranged in order of time, as well as my information enabled me.

Trudo's death was concealed, as is customary upon such occasions, until the prime ministers, who are stiled *Tamegan* and *Maybou*, had consulted together, and agreed which of his sons was to succeed ; a trust which devolves to these officers, upon the decease of their sovereign : for though the son, who is the first born, after his father comes into possession of the regal dignity, is esteemed heir apparent to his dominions, yet if he appears to these two ministers, from some defect or vice, of body or mind, to be unworthy of this exalted station, they have the power of rejecting him, and of chusing from among the other children, him who seems to be most deserving
or

or best qualified to rule over them.* Upon the present occasion, they rejected the eldest son, and were unanimous in fixing their choice on *Abadee*; whose reign has been a continued series of misery to his unhappy country, and who, notwithstanding some good qualities, has proved upon the whole, a bad king, and a worse man.

Tamegan and *Maybou* having determined on their choice, announced *Trudo's* death and proclaimed *Abadee* king: by which determination, his elder brother *Zingab*, finding his hopes disappointed, and himself aggrieved by the loss of an inheritance, with the expectation of which he had flattered himself; sounded privately the disposition of his friends. On applying secretly to those upon whom he had conferred favors in his father's life time, he received assurance, of numbers
B 3 being

* This we find was also the custom in the kingdom of *Whydah*; where a general plunder prevailed, until the choice of the new king was publicly announced; there is something remarkable in this temporary anarchy, (and return as it were into the state of nature) as if it were originally meant, to make the people eager for the revival of sovereign power, and a settled government.

being willing to espouse his cause; and he began to concert measures to surprize his brother, and seize the government either by stratagem or force. *Abadee* however, got intelligence of his design; *Zingab*, and the principal conspirators were seized, just on the point of taking up arms to assert his claim: *Zingab* was sewed up in a hammock at *Abomey*, in which he was carried to *Whydab*, where he was put into a canoe, and taken about two leagues out at sea, and there thrown over-board and drowned. The law of the country does not allow the sacred blood of the royal family to be shed, but appoints this punishment for their offences: such was the end of *Zingab*, and *all his adherents were put to death.*

The king, now clear of his competitor, and secure in the peaceable possession of his dominions, threw off the mask, and gave an unbounded indulgence to his inclinations; which unhappily were of the worst kind. One of the first edicts of his reign was, that every man of the name of *Bossa*, should be put to death; which cruel order was punctually executed throughout his dominions;

old

old and young, indiscriminately suffered, and many innocent and useful men, were lost to the community, for the gratification of his vanity; who thought it an insult to majesty, that a subject should bear the same name as the sovereign.

Though fame has transmitted this enormity to posterity, she has been kind to his memory in burying in oblivion the repeated acts of cruelty and oppression which at last roused *Maybou*, and induced him in 1735, to take up arms, to free his country from the tyranny, under which it groaned.

From the specimen above mentioned, we may judge, what the king was capable of doing; and great indeed must the provocations have been, that induced *Maybou* to take this step; for it is the disposition of the *Dabomans* to think favorably of their king, and approve his actions; they reverence him with a mixture of love and fear, little short of adoration. "I think of my king," replied a *Dabomy* man to me; when I asked him, just before his going to battle, if he was not apprehensive of finding the enemy too strong. "I think of my king," said

Dakon,* “and then I dare engage five of
 “the enemy myself.” I am anxious for your
 safety, said I, and shall be happy that you
 escape the dangers of the day. “It is not
 “material;” “he replied, my head belongs
 “to the king, not to myself; if he pleases to
 “send for it, I am ready to resign it; or if
 “it is shot through in battle, it makes no
 “difference to me; I am satisfied, so that it
 “is the service of my king.” Every *Dabo-*
man possesses the same sentiments; even at
 this day, after a tyranny of forty years, their
 loyalty and attachment remain unshaken.
 Though his people are daily falling victims
 to his avarice, or anger, and there is not an
 individual in his dominions, but has lost
 some near and dear connection by his orders,
 yet their misfortunes are attributed entirely
 to their own indiscretions; and whatever the
 king does, they are persuaded is right: such
 blind submission and obedience, is probably
 no where else to be found.

Maybou, who had been brought up and

* A faithful servant whom I employed in my factory,
 he afterwards fell undeservedly under the king's displea-
 sure, and was sold, by his order, for a slave.

fought

fought under *Trudo*, and had seen better days; finding all his persuasions ineffectual to reclaim the young king, who was deaf to his advice; could no longer remain a mere spectator of the distresses of his country: he had erred in his choice when he preferred *Abadee* to his brother; and judging it a duty which he owed to his country, to free it from the tyrant whom he had concurred in placing upon the throne, he withdrew from court, and soon appeared in rebellion at the head of a powerful army. Thus, in addition to the evils with which *Abadee* afflicted his country, he plunged it into the horrors of a civil war; the issue of which, had the event been equal to the justice of it, might have been fatal to him: but it terminated otherwise by the exertions of *Agaow**, who commanded the royal army; in which were many of the brave veterans who had so often conquered under *Trudo*. He entirely defeated the rebel army; *Maybou* and many of his friends fell in the engagement: the prisoners taken on this occasion were *put to death*;

* *Agaow*, is the title of the commander in chief of the king's army, and not the name of a particular man.

and

and the few who escaped, having nothing to hope from the king's clemency, and to avoid the tortures intended for them, fled into the neighbouring states, and ended their days in exile. The king seems to have harboured no vindictive resentment against *Maybou's* family, for he soon after advanced his younger brother into his office, and he continues to be *Maybou* to this time; a circumstance rather extraordinary in *Abadee's* conduct, who has given very few instances of his clemency. In offences less heinous than that of *Maybou*, when a man commits, or (what in the *Daboman* maxims amounts to the same) is accused, of a crime, for which he is condemned to death, or to slavery; his effects are forfeited to the king; his domestics, relations, and friends, are all seized; some of them perhaps suffer death; the remainder are always sold for slaves: when the delinquent happens to be a man of consequence, with numerous dependants and connections, who are made to suffer death, or slavery on his account, it is no inconsiderable loss to the state; yet this is a calamity, which often happens; and together with the carnage of war, has contributed

contributed greatly to depopulate this unhappy country.

CH A P. II.

THE internal tranquility of the kingdom was restored by *Maybou's* defeat, and death; but the *Foys*, did not long enjoy the sweets of peace: destruction threatened them from another quarter. To the north-east of *Dabomy* lies a fine, fertile, and extensive country, inhabited by a great, and warlike people, called the *Eyoes*; the scourge and terror of all their neighbours. These *Eyoes*, are governed by a king; but not by one so absolute as the tyrant of *Dabomy*. If what report says of him be true, when his ill conduct gives just offence to his people, a deputation from them wait upon him, it is said, and represent to him, that the burden of government has been so fatiguing, that it is full time for him to repose from his cares, and to indulge himself with a little sleep.

He

He thanks his people for their attention to his ease, retires to his apartment as if to sleep, where he gives directions to his women to strangle him; which is immediately executed, and his son quietly succeeds him, upon the same terms of holding the government no longer than his conduct merits the approbation of his people.

The *Dabomans*, to give an idea of the strength of an *Eyoe* army, assert, that when they go to war, the general spreads the hide of a buffaloe before the door of his tent, and pitches a spear in the ground, on each side of it; between which the soldiers march, until the multitude, which pass over the hide, have worn an hole through it; as soon as this happens, he presumes that his forces are numerous enough to take the field. The *Dabomans* may possibly exaggerate, but the *Eyoes* are certainly a very populous, warlike and powerful nation.

They invaded *Dabomy* in 1738 with an irresistible army, and laid the country waste with fire and sword to the gates of *Abomey*; here, the *Foys* had collected their whole strength, and waited the arrival of the enemy,

my, who were advancing with an incredible multitude.

The *Foys*, though inferior in numbers, were not intimidated; they had seen service under *Trudo*, but never was their valour called forth upon a more trying occasion; their country and every thing that was dear to them, lay at stake; and they did all that could be expected in its defence. The enemy attacked them in the morning; they acted wonders on that day; twice they repulsed the *Eyoes*, and had nearly given them a total defeat; but fresh supplies of the enemy continually pouring in, to replace those who fell, the *Foys*, worn out with fatigue, were obliged to yield at last to superior numbers, and retreated, under cover of the night, into *Abomey*: having killed of the *Eyoes*, above twice the number of their own army. Their situation now became truly calamitous, and no prospect was before them, but an utter extinction of the *Dabomy* name and nation.

Abomey is a very large town, surrounded with a deep moat, but has no wall nor breast-work to defend the besieged; nor are there

there any springs of water in it ; consequently, it could not be long tenable. The first care of the *Dabomans* on the night after the battle, whilst the *Eyoes* were too much fatigued to interrupt them, was, to send away the wounded, and the women and children, to *Zassa*, a town about twenty-five miles off, where the king then was ; who when he learned the unfortunate issue of the day, was immediately conveyed, with his women and treasures, to an inaccessible retreat, about four hours journey from *Zassa*. The path leading to it is extremely intricate, and known to very few of the *Dabomans* themselves ; and is never visited, except in cases of the last extremity, when the king is obliged to fly for the safety of his person. As none but the king's own family take shelter there, it was esteemed an extraordinary mark of respect shewn to *Mr. Gregory*, governor of the *English* fort at *Whydah*, who happened to be at *Zassa* at this unhappy time, that the king was pleased to take him in his royal suite to this place. *Agaow*, the king's general at *Abomey*, continued to defend the place, and amuse the enemy,

enemy, until he learned that the king was safe, and *Zassa* evacuated: he then took the advantage of a dark night, conducted the remains of his army safe, passed the enemy, and fled; leaving the town to the mercy of the *Eyoes*, who afterwards plundered and burnt it; as they also did *Calmina* and *Zassa*: they lived in the country at discretion, as long as they could procure subsistence; and in a few months, when that grew scarce, returned to their own country. Had they, when they engaged at *Abomey*, detached a part of their numerous army, and attacked *Zassa* at the same time, the king and all his treasure must inevitably have fallen into their hands: and for this neglect, their general was disgraced upon his return.

The *Eyoes* continued for several years, to harraß *Dabomy* with an annual visit: the *Foys* never thought it prudent to engage them afterwards; but when apprized of their coming, used to evacuate their towns, divide into small parties, and shelter themselves as well as they could in their fastnesses and woods. The king used all his efforts to obtain an accommodation, and offered them

them any reasonable compensation to refrain from hostilities; but it was difficult to satisfy their demands. They claimed, in consequence of an old treaty, an annual tribute; the payment of which had been omitted in the prosperous days of *Trudo*. These arrears were considerable; and fresh demands were also added, on account of the conquest of *Whydah*, which the *Eyoes* looked upon as an inexhaustible source of wealth to the king. Their expectations, upon the whole, were so exorbitant, that *Abadee* found it impracticable to satisfy them; and the *Eyoes* continued to ravage the country for several years, burning their towns, destroying their crops in harvest, killing many people, and carrying numbers away into captivity. In the year 1747, however, the *Eyoes* consented to an accommodation, and compromised the matter for a tribute, which is paid them annually at *Calmina*, in the month of *November*.

C H A P. III.

THE *Dabomians*, whilst they were thus distressed by the *Eydes*, were engaged in two other bloody wars (each of which continued above thirty years) with the *Mabees*, and with the old *Whydabs*; who had fled out of the country at the conquest, and were now assisted by their neighbours the *Popoes*.

The *Mabee* country, which is an extensive one, lies to the westward of *Dabomy*, on its borders; it is divided into several small states, each governed by its own laws, and independent of one another: these states form a *republic*, and unite for the common safety, when dangers threaten any of the confederated members. The war with them was entirely provoked by *Abadee*. They were disposed to live in friendship with him, but his restless spirit would not suffer them to remain in peace. He claimed a right of interference in their national concerns, and in-

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sisted

sisted on altering their mode of government ; and upon their refusal to comply, declared war against them. He had heard in his youth, that the *Foys* were invincible, and their arms irresistible : but if they were so in the days of *Trudo*, his misfortunes and disgraces should have taught *Abadee* to be less confident. He resolved therefore to abolish the republic, and give the *Makees* a king ; but he wanted talents proportioned to this enterprize. *Trudo* had been monarch, statesman, general, uniting all in his own person, and constantly fought at the head of his troops. *Abadee*, immured in his seraglio, where thousands administered to his pleasures, expected a prompt devotion to his will, and flattering himself with an easy conquest, thought nothing was more expedient for that purpose, than to signify to *Agaow*, " *That his house wanted thatch,*" which is the phrase used in giving his general orders to go to war, and alludes to the custom of placing the heads of the enemy, killed in battle, or any of the prisoners of distinction, on the roof of the guard houses at the gates of his palaces. *Abadee* pretended, that his subjects travelling

velling through the *Mabee* country to more distant nations, for the purposes of trade, were frequently oppressed by heavy taxes, arbitrarily imposed there by the states through which they had occasion to pass; that these states were so numerous and avaricious, that it was impossible, in the present situation of affairs, to regulate their demands, for the future security of his subjects' property; but that if *one* king governed the whole *Mabee* nation, treaties could then be established, to the mutual advantage of both kingdoms. This in fact was mere pretence; for no part of *Abadee's* conduct had testified that regard for the welfare and interest of his people, which his language on the present occasion seemed to manifest. The true reason was, that one of his favorite wives, who was a *Mabee* woman, had a brother whom he wished to advance to this dignity; but the *Mabees* refused to relinquish their independence, and submit to be governed by a tyrant; and *Abadee* persisted in his resolution. A war commenced in 1737, and was carried on with all that savage fury which is customary among barbarous nations. The pri-

soners of distinction were put to death; and the other captives consigned to slavery; these were the *best* terms either party allowed. Many battles were fought with various success; sometimes the *Mabees*, sometimes the *Dabomans* were victorious; but neither would relinquish their pretensions: to follow them through all their scenes of slaughter, would be a disgusting task, and indeed almost impossible.

The severest blow which the *Mabees* received was in 1752, about fifteen years after the commencement of the war: they had been unsuccessful in some battles, and were unable to keep the field. There is, in their country a very high mountain called *Boagry*, rendered almost inaccessible by nature, and deemed impregnable: thither the *Mabees* fled, with the shattered remains of their army. The *Dabomans* pillaged, and laid waste the country without opposition; and having imposed what terms, and contributions they pleased on the vanquished, *Aguow* sat down with his army and invested *Boagry*; which as a camp, had one fault; it was as difficult to quit, when occasion required, as it was arduous

arduous of access. Many skirmishes happened betwixt the besiegers and besieged, these making frequent sallies, and the others many attempts to force their way up the mountain. The *Mabees*, planted corn, and had plenty of water upon *Boagry*, which enabled them to persevere in a long resistance.

Agaow, had now invested them near twelve months, without being able to advance far up the mountain; when the king, solicitous for the honor of his arms, sent his general all the assistance that he was able to draw together, and ordered him to hazard every thing for the reduction of *Boagry*, whatever the loss of men might be on the occasion. *Agaow*, was by this time, well acquainted with the mountain, and led on his men to this dangerous enterprize, determined either to conquer, or die in the attempt: he attacked it, in every accessible part: the *Mabees*, made an obstinate resistance, and killed an immense number of their enemy; but at last, the bravery of the *Dabomans*, and their superior numbers, surmounted every difficulty; they routed the *Mabees* from their
C 3 entrenchments,

entrenchments, and summit. A prodigious slaughter ensued, for there was no possibility of escaping: the unfortunate remnant which the sword had spared, were led in triumph, captive to *Abomey*, where the chiefs were put to death, and the remainder sold for slaves.

The king was at this time warmly engaged with the old *Whydabs*, and *Popoes*; and had occasion for all his troops to reinforce his army in that quarter, which induced him to desist from further hostilities against the *Mabees* at present, and even to consent to a truce with them; but as this was ill observed by either side, it proved of very short continuance. The *Mabees*, though defeated, were far from being subjugated; those who had fled, after the calamity which happened at *Boagry*, returned to their country, and were still a formidable enemy: especially as the *Dabomans*, were now weakened by a series of near twenty years unprofitable wars.

Hostilities were renewed, and carried on as before, to the ruin of both countries; without producing any thing decisive. *Ab-*

dee

dee could not effect his purpose of imposing a king on the *Mabees*; nor were they so far humbled as to submit to accept of one. They resolved to retaliate the insult at *Boagry*, by invading *Dabomy*; and actually penetrated into that dismal forest which divides *Dabomy* from *Ardra*, in order by that manœuvre to intercept any succours coming from the kingdoms of *Ardra* or *Whydab* to the relief of *Dabomy*: but in consequence of some division in their councils (a grievance to which republics are generally exposed), they retired again without atchieving any thing worthy of the boldness and wisdom of the design.

In 1764, the advantage seemed to be on the side of the *Dabomans*, who then laid siege a second time to *Boagry*; but had not a sufficient force to render themselves masters of it. Several of *Ahadée's* sons were with his army, to animate the soldiers by their presence; and among them his favorite *Japera*, his father having sent him under *Agaow's* care, to acquire military excellence. This general had been encamped above twelve months around *Boagry*; when the king, impatient

patient at the delay, accused him of cowardice, and sent *Maybou* to take the command: with orders to proceed immediately to the assault. When *Agaww* found himself superseded, and disgraced, he judged it was time to consult his personal safety, as he well knew the king's displeasure to be implacable. Having *Jupera*, the heir-apparent in power, he could have taken a severe revenge of his ungrateful master; but he generously delivered him into *Maybou's* care, and withdrew privately to the *Mabees*: who received, and protected him.

Maybou, made an unsuccessful attempt against *Boagry*; was repulsed, and obliged to raise the siege: he returned with his army to *Dabonny*; and to add to the unfortunate event, *Jupera* died on the march. *Abadee* failed in his views, and in fact unable to prosecute them any further, never attempted any thing of consequence afterwards against the *Mabees*; and the person, in whose favor he had made so many fruitless exertions, dying some years afterwards, both parties seemed heartily tired of the war, and agreed to a peace in 1772, which still continues.

CHAP.

C H A P. IV.

DURING the continuance of the *Mabee* war, the *Dabomans* had too much employment, in another quarter, to permit them ever to breathe from their toils. The old *Whydabs*, assisted by the *Popoes*, allowed them no respite on that side. This war was still more ruinous if possible, than that which was carried on with the *Mabees*; the *Dabomans*, were generally obliged to act upon the defensive; and even when they routed the enemy, could reap but little advantage from the victory: for their country, environed by swamps, and creeks, is so defensible by nature, that it was next to impossible to pursue them. It may be necessary to explain the motives of this war.

When *Trudo*, king of *Dabomy* had subdued *Ardra*, and *Toree*, he led his victorious army in 1727, against the *Whydabs*, who shamefully fled before him; and without making
any

any resistance, or even trying the fortune of a battle, yielded their country an easy prey to the invader. Many were made prisoners, and sold for slaves; some surrendered themselves to the conqueror's mercy, and were admitted to be his vassals: but, the greater number escaped, and fled out of the country, taking refuge among their neighbours the *Popoes*, whose country borders on *Whydab*, to the westward, and settled there; in a low, marshy country, surrounded with swamps, and intersected with many branches of rivers, which form a multitude of islands, on which they lived. These refugees, assisted by the *Popoes*, with whom they were incorporated and became as it were one nation, bore an inveterate hatred against the *Dabomans*; and, urged by a desire of regaining their native country, omitted no occasion to harass them. Their vicinity to *Whydab*; the facility with which they transported their troops in canoes, within two miles of *Griwhee*, the capital of it; the embarrassed situation of the king's affairs, whose country was sometimes over run by the *Eyoes*, and whose whole force was at other times employed
against

against the *Mabees*, and this frontier left defenceless; afforded them many opportunities of committing invasions with advantage. They frequently got possession of *Whydab* beach, and interrupted the trade; in which event the shipping were often considerable sufferers: the white people, their goods, or whatever property happened to be on the beach fell a prey to them: sometimes they made incursions up to the town of *Griwbee*, where the English, French, and Portuguese, have each, a fort; and if attacked by a superior force, they readily escaped to their canoes, and eluded their pursuers: for the *Dabomans* have no address in engagements on the water, as they are altogether unacquainted with the management of canoes. An occasion presented in the year 1741, which had it been rightly managed, might have concluded these differences, to the satisfaction of the king, and to the advantage of his country: but, over-ruled by his evil genius, he neglected the opportunity; and exasperated the *Whydabs* more than ever.

The *Whydabs*, in their exile, still adhered to the system of their old government; and continued

continued to be ruled by a *king* : but it was necessary, on the accession of a new one, that he should be inaugurated at *Xavier*, which had been the seat of his ancestors, and the capital of *Whydab*, before the conquest ; for the celebration of which ceremony it was requisite, that permission should first be obtained from *Abadee*, who derived an advantage from it, by exacting a consideration for the liberty of going thither ; and as a truce was necessary for a cessation of hostilities on these occasions, he did not omit to turn it to account, whenever there was an opportunity, by employing his agents to sow divisions among them, in hope of reaping some advantage by that means.

To be king of the *Whydabs*, even in their humbled state, had its temptations ; and the brother of the rightful heir was, upon the death of his father, which happened about that time, ambitious of this rank. If *Abadee* did not suggest, he at least encouraged this scheme, with a view to divide the *Whydabs* ; and assured him of his support ; in return for which, the other engaged privately to become his tributary and ally, and
to

to pay a considerable sum upon his accession to the government. This wicked young man (relying on *Abadee's* protection) whilst the ceremonies were preparing at *Xavier*, to invest his brother with the regal dignity, had the audacity to murder him there, and the address to be appointed king in his place; and closed his achievement, by devouring the heart of his unfortunate brother; which last act of unnatural barbarity was the proof required by *Abadee*, of unlimited devotion to his commands.

The enormity of this action, and the engagements which the usurper had made with *Abadee*, though intended to be kept secret, did not altogether escape the knowledge of the *Whydahs*; they suspected what had passed, and several of them, instead of returning from *Xavier* to live under such a king, remained in the country, and settled under the protection of the Portuguese fort at *Griwbee*; of which *Seignior John Basile* was at that time governor; a gentleman of humane temper and engaging disposition. These people maintained a correspondence with their countrymen, and making a favorable

able report of the governor's behavior, and of their own situation, many of the old *Whydabs* were induced to come and settle in the country, to avoid the horrors of a civil war in their own: five or six hundred persons established themselves peaceably in this manner; and if this disposition had been properly encouraged, in all probability a much greater number had followed their example; but *Abadee*, without waiting for such a desirable event, by which he would have gained a large addition of useful and valuable subjects, cruelly determined to seize upon these poor people, and sell them for slaves. To facilitate his design, the king invited *Seignior John Basile* to *Abomey*, on pretence of business; but the true motive was, to have him in his power. The governor proceeded on his journey, and meeting *Agaorw* at the head of an army upon the road, in full march towards *Whydab*; he was arrested by the king's order, and informed that the only condition of regaining his liberty was to deliver up all the *Whydabs* who had put themselves under his protection: the governor urged his faith and honor plighted to these people;

people; and, treating the proposal with contempt, was detained prisoner by the general; who continued his march to *Griwbee*, and encamped on *Gonnegee*, a plain between that town and the river, by which position he cut off the retreat of the *Whydabs* to their own country. *Agaow*, finding the governor was determined not to betray the *Whydabs*, offered to take a certain quantity of goods, as a ransom for them: the proposal was accepted, and the goods delivered; but pretences were still found to detain the governor, and a fresh demand for more goods was made: these he also consented to pay, and sent an order to the fort for their delivery. A head servant of his, a black man, who had charge of the fort, saw that they were deceiving his master; and refused to send any more goods. He intimated his suspicions to the *Whydabs*, who finding no possibility of escape, resolved to defend themselves to the last extremity: they retired into the fort, and got every thing in order for its protection; determined, if overpowered at last, to sell their lives as dear as possible: *Agaow* remained quiet in his camp on *Gonnegee*, for
about

about a fortnight, perhaps waiting for orders; and then came to a resolution to attack the fort. This was surrounded with a wall and a deep moat, and mounted about thirty guns. *Agaw's* disadvantage lay in having no artillery; however, early in the morning, on the 1st of November 1741, he led on his troops to the storm, and began his attack on every side; those within the fort were not idle; but with their cannon made a prodigious slaughter: the *Dabomans*, with that bravery which animates them on all occasions, filled up their ranks with fresh men, as fast as others fell, and continued the assault. About noon a quantity of gunpowder in one of the bastions took fire, and communicated the flame to the roofs of the buildings, which were thatched, and blazed furiously: this accident threw the besieged into great confusion, which was considerably increased by an explosion of the magazine, in whose destruction every soul near it was involved. The *Dabomans* now entered at the embrasures, almost without opposition, and put every man they met with to the sword. The governor's faithful servant,
who

who had commanded in the defence, seeing all was lost, threw open the gate, and with a keg of gunpowder under his arm, and a lighted match in his hand, ran, impelled with rage and despair, towards the place where *Agaow* was: and having got as near to him as he could, with intention to make him a partner in his own unmerited fate, set fire to the powder, and heroically blew himself to pieces: his second in command was taken alive, and roasted afterwards before a slow fire at *Calmina*. *Abadee* afterwards rebuilt the fort for the Portuguese, and disavowed *Agaow*'s proceedings; denying that he gave him any orders to act as he had done; but, although he was desirous to throw the odium of this affair upon his general, no one pretended to acquit *Abadee* himself from the infamy of the whole plan and transaction.

Agaow was about to return from this exploit, when he received orders from the king to go and chastise the people of *Jacquin*; a country which borders immediately on *Whydab*, to the eastward: it was once a place of some consequence, and the Dutch had formerly a settlement there. It had been con-

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quered

quered by *Trudo*, and annexed to his dominions : but the inhabitants, taking advantage of the perplexed state of the king's affairs, had neglected for some time past to pay the tribute, which had been imposed on them. This country, like that of the *Po-poes*, surrounded with marshes and swamps, was of difficult access; and the *Dabomans* were not sufficiently acquainted with the environs, to be able to make an inroad into it: but it happened at this time, that a woman of some consequence, belonging to a *Jacquin* chief having been guilty of some gallantries, dreaded the punishment of her inconstancy, fled to *Dabomy*; and for a promise of the royal protection, engaged to conduct his army through the only path by which *Jacquin* could be invaded with effect. *Agarou* having this woman for his guide, entered *Jacquin* unexpectedly, and extirpated the whole nation, not leaving a single inhabitant alive in the whole country*; for the poor people, hemmed in by their impassable morasses, were

* *Adaurzon* II. sent a few families to re-establish a settlement there in the year 1777.

caught,

caught, as it were, in a trap, and could not escape.

CHAP. V.

THE *Whydahs* were too much disgusted with their new king, to suffer him to reign long over them ; he had rendered himself so odious, that he could not even form a party among them to support his pretensions, and unable to make *Abadee* the payment, which had been promised at his accession, all succours from that quarter were refused : he was therefore obliged to relinquish that government which he had atrociously obtained, and withdrew to *Dahomy* ; where, after wandering about for some time universally despised, he died miserably of a leprous disease, contracted immediately on his return from *Xavier* : and which the *Dahomans* attributed to the horrid repast he had made there, when he devoured the heart of his own brother.

All that had passed served only to exasperate the exiled *Whydabs* still more against *Abadee*, and hostilities were renewed with greater fury than ever: in 1743 they enlarged their plan of operations, and seemed determined to dispute the possession of *Whydab* with him. The *Popoes*, and all their other friends, concurred in assisting them, and they invaded *Whydab* with a powerful army. Their designs had been no secret, but it was out of the king's power to prevent them: *Dabomy* was at that time overrun by the *Eyoes* or *Iaos*, and every thing was in confusion: *Agaow* and the army were at a considerable distance, engaged with the *Ma-bees*; and *Whydab* was left almost defenceless, and effectually deprived of any military assistance: however, *Caukaow** did every thing that could be expected from a brave and loyal soldier: he put his small army in readiness; *Eubiga*, the vice-roy, assembled all that were able to bear arms in the town, and joined him; the *Xavier Cabocheers*, and all

* The title of the military officer who commands in *Whydab*.

their

their vassals increased his force; but still *Caukaow* was inferior to the enemy: however he was not intimidated, he knew his own heart, and relied on the bravery of his followers. Fear never enters into the mind of a *Daboman*; cowardice is no part of his composition: he marched out against the enemy, and met them about a mile to the westward of the *French* fort. The generals of both parties held a dispassionate conversation at the head of their troops; in which they declared to each other their respective determinations, the one to conquer, the other to defend the country: they drank together, and *Caukaow* toasted health to his king, and success to his arms; wishing that if he was unsuccessful on that day, he might not survive the disgrace, but perish like the glass, out of which he had drank, dashing it as he spoke against the ground, and breaking it in pieces. The battle commenced, and was obstinately fought: all that rude skill, and ferocious courage could effect, was executed on each side; at last *Caukaow* fell at the head of his men, after inflicting and receiving innumerable wounds, and distinguished both

as a general, and a soldier. The first in rank, were foremost in danger. *Eubiga*, and nearly all the chieftains of his party were among the slain; and the *Xavier* Cabocheers shared the same fate. The *Dabomans*, destitute of leaders, and overpowered by numbers, were thrown into confusion, and totally routed.

The enemy next day pillaged *Griwbee*, without opposition, and burned it; the inhabitants fled out of the country, and left the *Whydabs* in peaceable possession. They summoned the forts to submit, or at least to acknowledge the new government: but the governors continued attached to the king, and refused to accede to the proposals offered by his enemies. The old *Whydabs* flocked into the country in great numbers, with their families; and built a town upon *Gonnegee*, a plain between *Griwbee* and the river, just beyond all annoyance from the guns of the forts. Three tedious months elapsed after the battle, which had been so fatal to the king's affairs, without his receiving any advices from the governors of the forts; who began to be so much in want of provisions, that it is probable they could
not

not have continued much longer, to decline an accommodation with the *Whydabs*; when a messenger arrived privately from the king, with assurances that they might depend upon being speedily relieved; and entreating them to persevere in his cause for a few days longer. The messenger, having given this information, eluded the vigilance of the *Whydabs*, and returned with the same secrecy. *Abadee*, finding that the forts continued true to his interest, did not despair of recovering the country: he had not been idle before in making every provision that was in his power. He recalled *Agaorw* out of *Mabee*, and, as soon as the *Eyoes* permitted him, by returning to their own country, he mustered all his *Dabomans*, and increased his general's army to fifty-thousand men. This formidable army arrived in *Whydab* in ten days after the messenger had been there. As the *Whydabs* did not expect them, they were not prepared for an encounter: they were attacked, defeated, and driven out of the country; by which means the possession of it was once more secured to the king.

Let us cease for the present attending them through their subsequent hostilities, and proceed to relate an affair of some moment which followed next in order of time in this country.

CHAP. VI.

THE kingdom of *Whydab* having been recovered by this fortunate event, *Abadee* appointed a person named *Tanga*, to be *Eubiga* (or vice-roy) over it, in the place of his predecessor who had perished with *Caukaow*, in the late bloody conflict with the *Whydabs*: he was a man of violent passions; vain, proud, and ambitious; he maintained a great number of domestics and attendants, whom he attached to his person by his liberality; and to his interest by protecting them in their villainies, and screening them from justice in defiance of the king. His oppressions rendered him odious to the garisons at the forts; and his great influence
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and wealth gave no small uneasiness to the king; who nevertheless did not care to attack him openly, but waited a fit opportunity to get him into his hands by stratagem, or surprize. While *Abadee* was waiting to accomplish this purpose, *Tanga* was meditating nothing less, than the acquisition of *Whydah* kingdom for himself. A daring project, and not justified by even a plausible motive; for, being a eunuch from his infancy, he had no children to be elevated to royal dignity. The post which he already possessed was a very honorable one, and his opulence so considerable, that it amply afforded him the gratification of every desire, except that of insatiable ambition. His plan was, to gain possession of the *English* fort, and then to declare himself king. The command of any of the forts would have been a considerable assistance to his design; but he preferred this, from an opinion which prevails in the country that it is impregnable. The spot on which *William's Fort** stands, was formerly dedicated to re-

* The *English* castle in *Whydah* is so called.

ligious purposes, and to the exercise of sacred ceremonies: the deities which were formerly worshipped there, are supposed still to protect it; and, in compliance with the superstition of the natives, the governors permit a house within the walls of the fort to be appropriated to *Nabbakou*, the titular god of the place. It has hitherto been so fortunate, as to escape those calamities which the other forts have experienced; a circumstance, rather extraordinary, as the *Whydah* king, when he fled from *Xavier*, at the time of the *Dabomans* invasion of his kingdom, took shelter there; and found protection in it, until there was an opportunity of conveying him in safety out of the country. This might possibly have brought upon it, the vengeance of the *Dabomans*; however, they did not appear to resent it; though they plundered the *French* fort at that time, and afterwards that which belonged to the *Portuguese*, as we have already related; but the *English* fort, having met with no similar disaster, stood high in the opinion of the natives: and *Tanga* deemed the acquisition of
of

of it of greater importance to his designs, than all the others.

When *Tanga's* scheme was ripe for execution, he attempted to surprize *William's Fort*, in *August*, 1745, in the following manner. Under pretence of making a public visit to the forts, he gave directions that a certain number of his men should be ready to attend him. When the vice-roy visits the governors, it is customary for him to be accompanied by four or five hundred men, under arms; besides the musicians, flag-bearers, umbrella-carriers, and several employed immediately about his person; amounting perhaps to one hundred more. Upon the present occasion, *Tanga*, selected all these out of his best men, whom he could rely on, and knew to be devoted to his will; and hoped, that by introducing them, without suspicion, into the fort as usual, he should easily make himself master of it. Before he departed from his own house, he supplied his men with ammunition, and ordered them to load their muskets; an order which appeared strange to those who were not apprised of his secret intentions. The English
linguist,

linguist, who was accidentally present, struck with this circumstance, slipped away privately, and acquainted Mr. *Gregory*, the English governor, with what he had seen. Mr. *Gregory*'s suspicions were raised by the information, and he made a proper use of it, by providing for the security of his fort, whilst *Tanga* was paying a visit to the French governor. He ordered his guns to be loaded, and the gate shut, before the vice-roy arrived; and when he came, refused to admit him into the fort, unless he dismissed his retinue; *Tanga* refused to comply, and protested against such an exception, as an unprecedented indignity, to which it became him not to submit: he threatened, and soothed alternately, but to no purpose; the governor would not recede from his determination; and *Tanga*, finding it impracticable to introduce his ruffians, returned home extremely chagrined at the disappointment.

Apprehending from the governor's unusual precaution, that his designs were discovered; he began to fortify his house. *Abadee* on receiving intelligence of what had passed, declared

clared him a traitor, and set a price upon his head: some troops were sent to attack him, which he engaged, and defeated; but more succours arriving, they besieged him in his house, from whence he made frequent sallies, and sometimes with success; but his strength diminished daily by the loss of men in these skirmishes, and he saw no prospect of extricating himself. In this dilemma he consulted his priests; who, having performed their superstitious rites, informed him, That his safety alone depended upon getting into the *English* fort; this was no easy matter to effect; he was closely besieged by the king's troops, and upon bad terms with the *English* governor; who, besides abhorring his rebellion, had not forgiven an insult, which he received from him some months before; when in company with the other governors, he was going to *Abomey*, to complain to the king of his viceroy's oppressive conduct; *Tanga*, apprized of their intentions, met them on the road at *Ardra*, where he seized them; and having kept them for some days prisoners in the stable, among his horses, brought them back with him to *Whydah*, sufficiently humbled, and debarred.

debarred from all access to the king. Under these circumstances the only refuge pointed out to him by the priests (and which they had probably advised for this reason) seemed almost unattainable: but his affairs were desperate, and something must be attempted; he harangued his adherents, intreated their assistance, and distributed all his treasures among them: his silks, his coral, his gold, were lavished without reserve, to animate them on this emergency: his *wives* (for though an eunuch he had a seraglio of some hundreds) joined their persuasions, and his people at length worked up to an attachment and resolution worthy of a better occasion, refused to sacrifice him to their own safety; which they might have obtained by delivering him up: they determined to force their way through the king's troops, conduct their master to the English fort, and there recommend him to the governor's mercy. This resolution being adopted, the women, dreading a reverse of fortune, and despairing to meet again with so indulgent a lord, put each other to death: the oldest first slaughtering the young ones, and then cutting their own throats.

throats. This melancholy office being performed, and the house set on fire to destroy the remaining effects, and prevent their falling into the king's hands; *Tanga* and his party, with such part of his treasure as was most portable, sallied forth, and made good their passage through the king's troops, directing their course for the English castle; from whence they were fired upon, as they approached, and *Tanga* retreating into the garden, received a shot which ended at once his life and ambition. Originally, and in his youth, a captive, and a slave, he had the address to recommend himself to *Abadee's* friendship, who raised him to the highest rank: but his insolence, which was insupportable; and his ingratitude to his benefactor, proved how unworthy he was of the favors he had received. When he fell, his adherents immediately dispersed; some escaped out of the country, but the greater part of them were taken, and suffered, as they deserved.

The affection of *Tanga's* wives, which impelled them in the desperate crisis of his affairs to devote themselves to death, may perhaps

haps appear romantic, if not incredible. To explain this, it is necessary to observe, that *Tanga* did not guard his women with that jealous eye and strict confinement which is usual in that part of the world.—The *seraglio* was only a necessary appendage to the pomp and splendor of his rank; and out of this reservoir he generously supplied all his servants with wives. Such unprecedented bounty conciliated the sincerest regard of these people. Every young man within his jurisdiction was ambitious of serving *Tanga*: to his *seraglio* he appeared, not the rigid jailer, nor the tyrannic usurper of the affections;—but the generous arbiter of its liveliest pleasures. His women could not but be charmed with a freedom, which no other *seraglio* enjoyed; and would not survive that felicity and protection which was to terminate with the existence of their master, and of their lovers, whose ruin seemed inevitable.

C H A P. VII.

TANGA and his followers were not unworthy of the fate they met with; and if *Abadee* had restricted his vengeance to those who really deserved it, his character would have been less exceptionable; few real occasions offered to incur his displeasure; so general was the disposition among his people to submit implicitly to his will, and to applaud all his actions; but through the whole tenor of his reign, every man's safety was precarious, in proportion to his merit, or wealth: not content with being universal heir to their effects, and that every thing his subjects died possessed of belonged to him, the innocent inhabitants of whole villages were sold for slaves, to raise supplies for his extravagance: and although this grievance was repeated at his pleasure, such was their submission and attachment, that none presumed to complain. Unreasonable

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suspensions

suspicious occupied his breast, so that they who served him with solicitous fidelity, and became eminent by their exploits, and success, were generally at length the objects of his envy and horror. Among these was *Sbampo*, who signalized himself on many occasions, and held a considerable post in the army; he was the darling of the soldiers, and every tongue was busy in his praise: such merit could not fail to excite a tyrant's jealousy. *Abadee* from that moment determined to cut him off. *Sbampo* had a sister in the king's house, who, by some means, got intimation of the king's design: she could have no interview with her brother, for the king's women are forbidden to hold discourse with any man; but as she was at liberty to send provisions for his table, from the royal mansion, she concealed a knife and a cord, with a noose on the end of it, among the victuals; from which expressive allusion, her brother was at no loss to comprehend, that he was doomed to suffer, either by the cord, or by the sabre. He saved himself by a precipitate flight, and carried a considerable part of the army along with him into the

the *Popoe* country, where he was received in a manner suitable to his merit. The *Popoes* promoted him to the command of their army: which post he enjoyed to the day of his death in 1767, and bore to the last an implacable enmity against the ungrateful *Abadee*.

Agaow, who had served him zealously, and executed his orders with great success, was less fortunate, and fell a victim to his cruelty; the same *Agaow*, who had bravely stormed the *Portuguese* fort, who had recovered *Whydab*, and taken *Boagry*: who had in some measure restored the declining glory of the country, and once stood so high in the estimation of his king, that after bestowing many favors upon him, he was desirous to let the whole world see how much he honored his favorite *Agaow*; and actually gave him leave to build a house two stories high; which, however, the general modestly declined.

Where the inhabitants are in such abject slavery, that they must not sit upon a chair, because it is an indulgence reserved for white people, and a few only of the principal men, who enjoy this high privilege, by especial

grace and favor from the king; where none may presume, on pain of certain death, to have a door of boards for his house, to defend him from the weather; nor to make it decent, by whitewashing the interior part; in *such a country*, to have permission to build a convenient house, is a mark of extraordinary distinction: but *Agaow* did not continue long to enjoy his master's smiles; he was seized and brought before the king, who accused him of an intention to withdraw from the kingdom, and following the evil example of *Shampo* (who had joined the *Popoes*), to fly into the country of the *Mabees*. Nothing could be more unjust than this suspicion; and *Agaow*, with a becoming firmness, replied, it is said, to this effect: "I have manifested my zeal on various occasions for your service; and thought no march fatiguing, no battle hazardous, whilst executing your will; my actions, so often crowned with success, have added affluence and honor to your kingdom. What part of my conduct has exposed me to this accusation? You have, as pledges of the fidelity of your slave, my aged mother, my wives and my children
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“ in your hands. Where, or to whom in preference should I go? I have conducted your armies, and spread destruction through all the nations around us: is it probable I should throw myself into the arms of those who tremble at my name? Of those, whose country I have laid waste, and led the inhabitants captive, in triumph to your gate?”

The king desired him to acknowledge himself guilty, and trust to his royal clemency; *Agaow* refused to attest a falsehood, and was ordered to immediate execution. The person whose business it was to perform this horrid duty, though hackneyed in deeds of death, was too much shocked on this occasion, to acquit himself with propriety; the scimitar failed, in his hand, to perform the office of beheading, it only mangled, the unhappy victim. He was sent back to prison, and strangled there. The family of this brave man are now so much reduced, that his eldest son was glad to find employment as a servant in my factory.

C H A P. VIII.

THE *Whydabs*, assisted by the *Popoes*, and directed by the sagacious advice of *Shampo*, became more formidable than ever: they visited the *Whydab Beach*, and gave frequent interruptions to trade. In disputing the possession of *Whydab Beach*, the *Dabomans* were often very roughly handled, and as often returned unsuccessful: they had lost numbers of their men in these skirmishes, when their priests at last discovered, that their oracles had forbidden them to attack the enemy on the *Beach*, but had ordered that they should wait in readiness, between *Griwhee* and the river; and that the party which should first cross the river, and begin the attack, should infallibly be routed. This was no unwelcome discovery, because it afforded a *salvo* for their honor, and an apology for submitting to insults, which they were too weak to resent.

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The king at last took the resolution of making a powerful effort, to restrain these people; and in 1753, some time after the taking of *Boagry*, when a kind of truce with the *Mabees* afforded him some leisure, he sent a numerous army against them. They were provided with some canoes, and seized others belonging to the enemy, which enabled them to penetrate into their country; but it was a mode of warfare which they did not well understand. *Shampo*, who commanded the confederated *Whydahs* and *Ponces*, by pretending to fly, encouraged the *Dahomans* to advance: by degrees they were bewildered among swamps, rivers and marshes, in a wretched country, where provisions began to fail them: however, they pushed boldly forward, hoping to bring the enemy to an engagement; but *Shampo* outwitted them; and, by the dexterity of his manœuvres, he drew them on to that narrow slip of barren sand, which reaches nearly from *Volta* to *Benin*, and is from half a mile to three miles in breadth, between the sea and a river, which runs nearly parallel to the Beach, for about two hundred miles:

here the retreat of the *Dabomans* was effectually cut off, and the *Popoes* employed themselves in firing at them at their leisure, from their canoes; but the greater part perished by disease and famine. They were so numerous (say the *Popoes*, who perhaps may exaggerate) that the fish of the river, assisted by the beasts, and birds of prey, were not able to eat them all; but their putrid carcases corrupted the air, and occasioned a pestilence in the country. The whole army was lost here, *except twenty-four*, whom *Shampo* sent back, to acquaint *Abadee* with the fate of their companions: when they had told their sad tale, *Abadee* ordered them to immediate execution, bidding them go express to the shades, to inform their comrades how much he disapproved their conduct in the war!

The next affair of any consequence that occurred was in 1763, when the old *Whydabs* and *Popoes*, in their turn, invaded *Whydab*: *Shampo* himself, was too old and infirm to take the field with them, but his son commanded; and was accompanied by the whole flower of the *Popoe* chiefs: they advanced into

into the country without opposition, for old *Honnou*, who was then *Eubiga*, or vice-roy, would not venture out to risk a battle, but remained in *Griwbee* with his men, to defend the town. The *Popoes* were advancing to attack it before he ventured to engage them: he was wounded and carried off the field early in the fight, and the command devolved on *Baddely*, who made a gallant defence, but was obliged to yield to the superior force of the enemy; and retreated with his men towards the French fort, in expectation of being protected by their guns; but he was disappointed: though the king's honor, and the safety of the country were at stake, though the enemy had begun to set the suburbs on fire, the French fired nothing but powder at them. This neutrality, if it deserved the name, however politic it might be, was certainly not very grateful; for if the manner in which the king usually treated his own people were never so exceptionable, yet the whites had nothing to reproach him with, in his conduct towards them. He was always respectful, and generous to a degree of profusion: in all disputes between
them,

them, and his subjects, if they had but the color of justice on their side, he determined in their favor: and the complaisance, civility and respect, with which they are universally received in his dominions, are greatly owing to his own conspicuous example.

The *Popoes*, animated by the conduct of the French, advanced boldly: *Baddely* and his men were obliged to fly before them: the *Popoes* thought they had nothing more to fear, and were preparing to burn the vice-roy's quarters; in their way thither, they had to march past the English fort, where Mr. *Goodson*, the governor, had a warm reception provided for them; which they did not expect: his cannon, loaden with musket balls, and grape-shot, made a prodigious havock among them, and threw them into the utmost confusion; they could not advance, and it was some time before they had presence of mind, to consult their safety by flight. The *Dabomans*, at this instant, rallied, having just received a considerable reinforcement; the *Popoes* had taken them at a disadvantage, they were not expected on that day, and as it was seed-time, the vice-roy

roy had permitted half his people in the morning, to go to their plantations; these were now returned, and *Baddely* led them on to the pursuit: there could not be a more compleat victory. Of thirty-two general officers, distinguished by the large umbrellas which were carried over them, thirty were killed on the spot. *Affurrey*, *Shampo's* son, escaped from the field; but overwhelmed with grief and shame, sat down beneath a tree and shot himself; only one survived to conduct the shattered remains of their army back. The king had dispatched *Agaow* and the army down before, but they did not arrive till next day; Mr. *Goodson* had the sole merit of the victory, as the king gratefully acknowledged.

The *Dabomans*, now weakened by a long series of unprofitable wars, were unable to follow up their victory; but contented themselves with driving the enemy out of the country: and the *Popoes* and *Whydahs* having lost the flower of their men, and of their generals in the late engagement, attempted nothing of moment after this; tho' hostilities were continued on a smaller scale for several

ral years: confined merely to plundering parties, and occasional visits to *Whydah* Beach; where the effects of the white traders on landing or embarking, sometimes fell into their hands: but in 1772, a peace was happily concluded, under the mediation of *Lionel Abson*, Esq. governor of *William's Fort*, to the mutual advantage of both parties: who after forty years of war, now enjoy the profits and pleasures of undisturbed commerce and social intercourse. This able governor bestows so much attention on this affair, and is so circumspect on the transactions of both parties, by whom he is equally respected, and acknowledged to be an impartial umpire between them; that whilst he continues to superintend them, a firm peace may probably continue.

Abadee worn out with years and infirmities, engaged in nothing worth relating after this. He died on the 17th of *May*, 1774; and was succeeded by *Adaunxou* II. the present king.

A JOURNEY

A J O U R N E Y
TO THE COURT OF
BOSSA AHADÉE,
KING OF DAHOMY,

In the Year, 1772.

WHYDAH, once a flourishing and independent kingdom, but now a maritime province of the *Dahoman* empire, is situated to the eastward of the *Gold Coast*; between the rivers *Volta*, and *Benue*. The road in which ships that trade there anchor, is in 6 deg. 27 min. north latitude. Landing is always difficult and dangerous, and frequently impracticable for several weeks together, from the violence of the breakers on the

the shore ; and can only be effected in canoes, which the ships take with them from the *Gold Coast* : they are manned with fifteen or seventeen *Fantees* each, hired from *Cape Coast* or *El Mina* ; hardy, active men, who undertake this business, and return in their canoe to their own country, when the captain, in whose employ they serve, has finished his trade.

Grigue or *Griwbee*, the capital of this province, situated on a sandy plain, about three miles from the sea, is a large, straggling town, which contains about eight thousand inhabitants. It is the residence of the vice-roy, who is assisted in his command by two other *Cabocheers*, and a military officer of high rank. The English, French, and Portuguese have each a fort here, and several commodious factories, for the accommodation of captains of trading ships, who purchase here between five and six thousand slaves annually.

My business requiring an interview with the king, I applied to the vice-roy for the necessary attendants, and was furnished by him with a linguist, six hammoc men, ten porters, and

and a captain of the gang; who was responsible for the conduct of the others: my own servants, and a few others attending on the captain, who were armed, made up gar number thirty.

The porters, having each received their several loads, which consisted, besides a mat tress, a small trunk of wearing apparel, and some provisions and liquors for myself, of a case or two of spirits which I provided for their own use, some bags of cowrie shells (the current money of the country), for defraying our expences, and a few pieces of silk for presents, set off by day light; and I got into my hammock, and commenced my journey to *Abomey* at six in the morning of *February 1, 1772*.

In passing by the market place, I found a great number of people collected there, and observing some large umbrellas among them, I concluded that the vice-roy and his Cabicheers were of the party: surprized at this early assembly, I sent a servant to inquire the occasion of it; but before he could return, a messenger from the vice-roy, who had discovered my approach, accosted me with a
message

message from his master, requesting to speak to me before my departure. I found him passing sentence of death on a criminal, a middle aged woman, who was on her knees before him, in the midst of a circle formed by his attendants. I requested her life might be spared; and, from the circumstance of his having sent for me, flattered myself that my offer to purchase her for a slave, would be accepted; but I was disappointed: he told me the king himself had considered the offence, and decreed the sentence; which was, "that her head should be cut off, and fixed upon a stake" which was lying by her, and which she had been compelled to bring with her, from *Abomey*, for that purpose.

During this conversation a little girl, prompted by curiosity, and ignorant of what was doing, made her way through the crowd; and discovering her mother, ran to her with joy to congratulate her on her return. The poor woman, after a short embrace, said, "Go away, child, this is no place for you," and she was immediately conveyed away. The vice-roy proceeded in his sentence, which the poor wretch heard with seeming
indifference,

indifference, picking her teeth with a straw which she took up from the ground. When the vice-roy concluded his charge to the spectators, of obedience, submission and orderly behavior, which the king required from all his people; the delinquent received a blow on the back of her head, with a bludgeon from one of the executioners, which levelled her to the ground; and another severed it from the body, with a cutlass. The head was then fixed on a pole in the market place, and the body was immediately carried to the outside of the town, and left there to be devoured by wild beasts.

The person that was executed was one of those who kept a little shop in the market; and a few days before, on discovering that some trifle had been stolen from her, she took from the fire a small stick, one end of which was burning, and waving it over her head (a usual custom in the country) exclaimed aloud "Whoever has taken my property, if they do not return it, I wish they may die and be extinguished like this stick." In going through this ceremony, a spark fell on
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the dry thatch of one of the huts, and set the market on fire.

After a delay of half an hour on this disagreeable occasion, I resumed my journey. The face of the country, though flat, is extremely agreeable; it is mostly open, and a considerable portion of it cultivated, interspersed with some clumps and groves of lofty and luxuriant trees. In an hour and an half we approached the town of *Xavier*, which is environed with plantations of yams, potatoes, callivances, and corn; for which there is a ready market at *Griwbee*.

Before the *Dabomy* conquest in 1727, when *Whydah* was an independent kingdom, this was the residence of the kings of *Whydah*, and the English, French, Dutch, and Portuguese had forts or factories here, on which those at *Griwbee* were dependent: but these were abandoned on that event, and the guns removed by the conqueror, *Guadja Trudo*, to his palaces at *Ardra*, *Calmina*, and *Abomey*: no vestige of them now remains, but the moats which furrounded them. The site of the palace of the *Whydah* kings can also still be ascertained, by the trench which encompassed
passed

passed it: the place is now overgrown with lofty trees, and is held sacred by the representatives of that unfortunate family, who live in exile with the remains of their countrymen in the vicinity of *Popoe*; and on his accession to the government of his few and needy vassals, the new king must come to this spot to be inaugurated.

All writers who have described this country, extol its natural beauties and the fertility of its soil; previous to the conquest it is said to have been so extremely populous that land was claimed as private property; and the inhabitants, from their great advantages in commerce (this being the great mart of trade for a very extensive tract of the interior country), are said to have abounded in riches. An anecdote which I have heard of the last king of *Whydah*, from the old people of the country, confirms his wealth in some degree.

When Capt. *Ogle* (afterwards Sir Chaloner) was sent in 1722, in the *Swallow* man of war, to the coast of Africa, in quest of *Roberts*, the pirate, he landed at *Whydah*, and acquainted the king with the purpose of his

errand. The king told him, "If he should secure that rascal *Roberts*, who had long infested his coast, he would give him fifty-six pounds of gold dust," pointing to an iron half hundred weight that lay near him, which was to ascertain the quantity. Capt. *Ogle* fell in with and took *Roberts's* ship, the *Royal Fortune*, at *Cape Lopez*; *Roberts* was killed in the engagement; the pirates were tried and condemned at *Cape Coast*, where most of them were executed; but half a dozen of them were carried to *Whydah*, and hanged there; and the king discharged his promise by giving Capt. *Ogle* the handsome reward he had promised him.

We made no halt at *Xavier*, the hammoc men chusing to jog on at their usual rate of about five miles per hour; relieving each other occasionally. From thence to *Toree* took up two hours. It is but a small town, and, being a convenient stage, the inhabitants derive some advantage from supplying travellers with refreshment. It is separated from the province of *Whydah* by a pretty deep and rapid river, whose banks are covered with stately trees, and a great deal of close underwood,

underwood, which afford a convenient shelter to elephants, of which there are plenty hereabouts.

This river was formerly the northern boundary of the *Whydab* kingdom; and when the *Dabomans* crossed it, instead of disputing the passage, or risking a battle in defence of their country, the infatuated *Whydabs* contented themselves with placing, with great ceremony, the fetish snake in the path, to oppose the invading army; which not answering their hopes and expectations, they deemed all other resistance vain, and fled precipitately before the conqueror. We crossed the river over a tolerably good bridge, formed by wooden piles placed at proper distances, and covered with faggots and hurdles.

Here we overtook our porters, and the hammoc men being disposed to take a little rest and refreshment, I intended to amuse myself with strolling through the town, and viewing it. Though I purposed to be alone, I found myself followed by my captain; on telling him I did not require his attendance then, and that he might remain with his

companions, he replied, that "the *Torees* were a strange sort of people, and had bad customs; and, as he had to answer with his head for my safety, he would not trust me alone among a people who made a practice of eating men:" though I was pretty certain his fears for me were unnecessary, yet to make him easy I returned to my party, reflecting on the prejudices which people residing at not more than twenty miles distance entertained of their neighbours.

When the hammoc men had rested a little, and taken a slight repast, we resumed our journey, and proceeded to a small town, called *Azoway*, which we reached in a couple of hours; the road very good, but no settlements or plantations between the two places; and as the country was covered with thick woods, and the grass grew luxuriantly, higher than our heads, which prevented a free circulation of air, I found the heat, now that the sun had gained the meridian, so extremely fatiguing, that when we reached *Azoway*, I readily consented to the hammoc men's proposal, of having my hammoc suspended under the shade of a spreading

ing tree, whilst they went to bathe in an adjoining river, which refreshed them exceedingly; and we proceeded with fresh spirits for *Ardra*, which we reached in two hours.

Ardra was once the capital of a great and powerful kingdom, whose dominion extended from *Volta* to *Benin*: it is pleasantly situated on a gently rising eminence of gravelly soil. A prodigious number of palm trees grow in the neighbourhood of it, which add greatly to the beauty of the prospect, and supply the inhabitants with great quantities of the oil, which they bring to market at *Whydab* in large callebashes that contain from five to ten or twelve gallons each. The king and several of his great men have houses here; but they seldom visit them, and it is now greatly reduced from what it formerly was.

I was conducted to apartments in a house belonging to one of the king's officers, which are appropriated to the accommodation of white men on their journey, and was presented, by the man who had the care of it, with a jar of cool water, and a pot of the country beer, called *pitto*; which favor I

acknowledged, by returning a flask of brandy.

Here we resolved to stop for the day, and my retinue, having deposited their baggage in my apartment, and suspended the cotton hammoc in which I travelled, with the mattresses in it, for my night's lodging, went to the quarters provided for them, and left me to recover, in silence and retirement, from the fatigues of the day; nor was I interrupted by any impertinent curiosity of the town's-people during the remainder of it, and passed the night without even a bolt to the door, in the most perfect security. My sleep, however, was greatly interrupted by the incessant howling, roaring and barking of wild beasts, particularly the jackals, called by the natives *twetwees* who, as if it had been its regular police, continued prowling through the town during the whole night, and disturbed us with their execrable cries. They are fierce, voracious animals, about the size of a large mastiff dog, but much stronger in all their parts, particularly the jaws, teeth and legs, which are remarkably strong: their feet are very large, and armed with

with formidable claws. They quit their retreats in the woods soon after dark, and range in troops through the towns and plantations, in quest of food; any domestic animal that is not secured in a house, or at least within high walls, is sure to become their prey; but scarcely any thing comes amiss to them: when they cannot get better fare, they eat any kind of trash. I have frequently seen the stomachs of those that have been killed, full of pieces of broken calabashes that had once contained oil in them; and of old dry cow-hides, that had been used for covering the rolls of Portuguese tobacco. They are the greatest devourers of the carcases of those who are executed as criminals, or sacrificed at the public festivals.

They readily discover dead bodies that are interred, and drag them out of their graves: this is a joint operation of several; and when they have got their prey before them, they dance and caper round it with great exultation for some time, before they devour it. When any of them singly falls in with a booty, he changes the horrid roaring which he used in the pursuit, to another vile note, which

which is to summon his companions to come, and partake with him; and it is by the same note they announce the discovery of a human grave, and collect a party to explore its contents. I never knew an instance where they attacked a cow, that they did not seize the udder first; and in *Whydah*, where they are very numerous, I have often known cows rescued from them, with the loss of that part, by the speedy exertions of the people running immediately to the place where the piteous bellowings of the poor animal directed them. I am surprized, that *Mons. Buffon* should omit to mention, that though this animal has a strong resemblance in figure to the wolf, and canine species, it differs from them in a striking feature, by having only two teats, which are placed one on each side of the breast, like a monkey*.

* *Minifica pudendorum conformatio extat. A fœmina, mas haud facile dignosci potest. Latitant penis ac testes intus, subter cutem hypogastricam. Per foramen effluit urina; penisque in coitu detruditur. Tantam autem rima labiis muliebribus profert similitudinem, ut, specie prima, valde ambiguum sexus estimetur, et quasi *Hermaphroditicum*,*

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The kingdom of *Ardra* was reduced, both in extent and power, by the revolt and separation of several provinces, before it was attacked by the *Dabomans*, under *Guadja Trudo*, in 1725. However, the *Ardras* made an obstinate resistance, and are said to have lost fifty thousand men in a battle near this town, which lasted *three days*, before they were subdued.

Early on the next morning, (February 2d) we continued our journey across a very agreeable country, and having passed through two villages, stopped at a town called *Havee* and breakfasted: it is but an inconsiderable place, though the king has a house in it. Our stay here was no longer than necessary, and we proceeded to *Whybow*; which place, I reached about ten o'clock, and was kindly received by the hospitable old *Cabocheer*, who provided an excellent dinner for me, and gave my whole retinue abundant proof of his liberality, by supplying them plentifully with good cheer. This old man's name was *Jabrakou*; he had been a warrior in his youth, and having acquitted himself with reputation, was rewarded with the government of
this

this town. I found him a keen sportsman : he did not like domestic animals, he said, but the chase furnished him with a variety of delicacies, and he shewed me his larder, which was well stored with buffalo, venison of different sizes, and sorts, wild hog, and *Agouti*, or *Busb-Cat* ; of all these he pressed me to partake, for my journey, which though I declined as having no occasion for, yet on coming away, he insisted on my accepting a couple of nice guiney fowls; which, he said, he had ordered to be roasted for my supper. It was with much difficulty I prevailed upon him to accept a small present in return ; which he refused to do, until I promised to spend a few days with him on a hunting party, at my return.

I recollect *Monsieur Buffon* says, the *Aguti* is peculiar to the new world ; and is found no where but in *America*. They are gregarious animals, abound in this part of *Africa*, and are esteemed a great dainty by the natives. The *Busb-cat*, (by which name it is distinguished among the British traders at this coast) approaches nearly in the length of its body, to that of a full grown hare, and

and is rather thicker. The body, when divested of its skin, appears incased with fat, like a hog. The tail is short, and not bushy. I do not remember the number of its claws; but the feet are small, and do not seem formed for burrowing in the earth. The hinder legs are longer than the fore ones, and the ears are rounded and short. The lads who seized and brought them to me for sale, related that the practice was to wait for these animals in their haunts, morning and evening. That they were generally seen in companies (or probably families) of fifteen, or twenty, following one another in the same path. The head-most were suffered to pass on unmolested, and then an assault was made upon the rear of the party with sticks; and by this manœuvre, two or three were usually taken prisoners. On my asking the reason, why they did not make their first attack upon the leaders? they replied, that in such case, the assailants would be exposed to the fury of all that followed; and that their bite was extremely severe: this, I was induced to believe, as they are furnished with two very formidable incisory teeth in the

the upper jaw. But by beginning with the rear, there was little danger, because, those which were already passed, continued to march on, without disturbing themselves about the fate of their companions. The muzzle of the *Busb-cat* (except that the upper lip is divided like that of a hare) is not very unlike that of a rat; the upper jaw projecting considerably beyond the lower. Instead of soft hair, they are covered with harsh, coarse, stiff bristles, which adhere so slightly to the skin, as to be separated by a slight touch. This creature is endued with a power of erecting its bristles, which are of a brownish colour, *clouded with dark spots*. It is on the authority of the *Brasilian* Portuguese captains who trade at *Whydah*, that I suppose this animal to be the *Agouti*; for these persons assured me, that it is not at all different from those which are so common in *Brasil*; and the French captains, who had been at *Cayenne*, concurred in the same opinion. The African *Agouti*, is very fat, and its flesh tastes greasy, and strong, unless it has been cured by smoak; which is a preparation

preparation that makes it exceedingly palatable. *

Having staid with my old friend until evening, I set off for *Appoy*, which is an hour and a half's journey; and lodged there, in a house provided by the king's order, for the accommodation of white people. I was now come to the disagreeable and truly fatiguing part of the journey, and judged some

* *Piso* (*Hist. Nat. lib. 3.*) enumerates five species of the *Lepus* in *Brazil*; of which the *Agouti* is the third. In the circumstances particularly of its bulk and spots, the *Bush-cat* of *Whydah* seems to have a nearer resemblance to the *Paca*, which stands foremost in his classification. The American *Agouti* is rather a smaller animal; has short round ears; its hinder feet are armed with six claws, and its anterior with only four: when it is eating, it holds the food between its fore paws, and sits erect on its haunches. It produces seventeen young ones at a litter, thrice in the year. In *Pere Labat's Voyage aux Isles de l'Amerique*, is a bad figure of it; but his description is very correct. He speaks of three species observed in the *Carib* islands. *Peter Martyr* allots the same number to the island of *S. Domingo*: they were the common food of the Indians, who called them the *Uti*, or *Outi*, which scarcely differs from the continental name, *Acouti*.

That it is common to *Africa* and *America*, is a curious fact. Are we to suppose, that there once existed an actual junction

some rest necessary, previous to entering upon it. Here the *great wood* commences, through which, the path is so narrow, crooked, and bad, that it is impossible to be

junction of the two continents? Or, that an intercourse of navigation prevailed between them in remote ages, prior to any history or tradition that has reached us? To the former supposition it will be objected, that the elephant, and other quadrupeds of *Africa*, have never (as far as we are informed) been seen in *America*, either by the Indian Aborigines, or by the first European discoverers; and that *America*, in its turn, possesses some not yet known to exist in *Africa*; as the *tamandua*, &c. Navigators, indeed, might transport from one country to the other, a breed of the smaller esculent quadrupeds, as the *Agouti* for example. This is a subject upon which a great deal of various conjecture may be hazarded; but of which nothing can now, with certainty be known.

Father *Labat*, who was an admirer of good cheer, and not uninstructed in the art of cookery, has given a receipt for the best manner of dressing this animal. He tells us, that "first of all it is to be scalded with milk, like a pig; " and, when intended for the spit, great care must be taken " to fill its paunch with a rich stuffing, composed of the " harflet mixed with yolks of eggs, sweet herbs, and spicery. " I have eaten it, says he, many a time, dressed according " to this, and other fashions, and always found it an excellent dish, and of easy digestion." Tom. III. fo. 25.

carried

carried in a hammoc, even at the present, which is the best and driest season of the year.

We entered the wood at three o'clock in the morning, February 3d, with the advantage of a bright moon, and serene sky. The captain of the guard disposed his men, some in front, some in the rear, with loaded muskets, to defend us from the attacks of wild beasts, with which this dreary wood abounds; two of the hammoc men, carrying lanthorns with lighted candles in them, on each side of me, on which the natives have great reliance for terrifying the beasts of prey: the whole party singing, and shouting as loud as they could bellow; blowing their trumpets, and firing muskets occasionally, which, with the chattering of monkeys, alarmed at our approach, the squalling of parrots, the roaring of wild beasts, and the crashing and rustling of elephants through the underwood, formed the most horrid discord that could be conceived.

After a fatiguing march of five hours, we reached *Agrimee*, a small town on the opposite side of the wood; where we halted some

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time, to breakfast; and then resumed our journey to *Calmina*, which we reached in two hours. *Calmina* is a large town, and may contain about fifteen thousand inhabitants. The king frequently resides here, and has a spacious house, which occupies with its appendages, almost as much ground as *St. James's Park*: it is inclosed with a high mud wall, which forms nearly a square. On a former visit, I measured one side of it, and found it *one thousand seven hundred paces* long; in the centre is a gateway, and large guard-house, on the roof of which, are exposed, a great number of the skulls of prisoners taken in war.

At *Calmina*, I was introduced into apartments in *Maybou's* house, where I met a messenger from him, with compliments, to congratulate me on my safe arrival; and desiring to be informed, what time I proposed to enter *Abomey*, and whether I would consent to be received *in state*, by the great officers of the court? which ceremony, consists of the prime minister, and other head men, coming out about half a mile, on horseback, with numerous attendants, under arms, who
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perform their military exercise, and fire a few rounds of musketry; after which, the great men alight, and receive the stranger under the shade of large umbrellas; present him first with a tumbler of cool water, and afterwards with a small glass of spirits; which is drank to the king's health; and then they proceed on foot, to accompany him into the town.

I declined this honor, as agreeing but badly with my present fatigue; and dismissed the messenger, charged with compliments on my part, to his master; and remained there till evening. In the interim, an old lady of the house provided me with an excellent dinner, which came very seasonably, as the porters, with my provisions, did not arrive in time, owing to their fatigue in crossing the wood.

I left *Calmina* at five in the evening, and prosecuted my journey for *Abomey*, which I reached in two hours: the intermediate country is cleared of trees, and the road, which is an excellent one, lying high, affords a very pleasing prospect of the country, which I found in high cultivation,

chiefly of corn and callivances, for the supply of the adjoining towns. Half way, between *Calmina* and *Abomey*, is a country house of the king's, and a village called *Dawbee*; which was the ancient residence of his family, and the capital of their little territory, before they emerged from their original obscurity; when his ancestor, *Tacodonou*, early in the last century, gained *Calmina* by treachery, and *Abomey* by force of arms; which laid the foundation of the *Daboman* greatness.

On my arrival at the gate of *Abomey*, I was saluted with fifteen guns, and conducted to the white men's apartments in *Maybou's* house; whose steward waited on me, with a present from his master, of a jar of cool water, a pot of *pitto*, and some fowls. *Maybou* soon made his appearance, accompanied by *Eubigab* the vice-roy of *Whydah*, and presented the king's compliments on my safe arrival, and escape from accidents, or sickness on the journey; which was followed by a present from the king, of a sheep, some fowls, two jars of *pitto*, two baskets of corn-flour,

flour, a callebash of palm oil, one of salt, and a flask of brandy.

Having had occasion to mention *Maybou's* name, it may be necessary to explain his office, and that of a few others, who will be introduced in the sequel. The prime minister is called *Tamegab*: he is the first civil officer of the state, and ranks immediately after the king: he is the *only* person in his dominions whose head the king may not take off at his pleasure. It is *Tamegab's* duty to assist the king with his advice, and to aid him in the cares of government. Upon the decease of the king, he, and *Maybou*, have the power of appointing which of his sons is to succeed to the government: though the first son born after his father's accession, is deemed the heir apparent, yet, if *they* think him unworthy to succeed, they have a right to confer the sovereignty on some one of his brothers, whom they judge possessed of superior merit and abilities. The next in rank is stiled *Maybou*; he is also a counsellor of the king, and acts as master of the ceremonies; he directs, or superintends the public festivals of the court; and has the care

of all strangers that visit *Dabomy*, whether Europeans, Moors, or Negro ambassadors from neighbouring states. *Tamegab*, and he, are judges in criminal cases; and one, or other of them, are almost constantly with the king, informing him of every circumstance that passes. *Agaow* is commander in chief of the army. *Eubigab* is vice-roy of *Whydab*: the literal translation of his title is, "*Captain of the white men.*" *Jabou*, is master of the horse: he has the care of criminals, and is to see their punishments inflicted; he has also the superintendence of the plantations, which supply the king's household with provisions; and to see that the *women who are to cultivate them* are not remiss in the discharge of their duty. These are the principal personages of the kingdom; to which offices they have no hereditary claim, being appointed to them by the king's particular favor, arising from the opinion he entertains of their qualifications and abilities.

The court was engaged at this time in the celebration of a grand festival, which continues several weeks, and is called "*the annual customs*;" when the king, waters the
graves

graves of his ancestors with the blood of many human victims. The governors of the forts at *Whydah* are expected to attend, and make a present on the occasion; which should consist of at least one piece of Indian damask, or some other handsome silk: the vice-roy of *Whydah*, and the governors of the different towns and provinces, must be there with their presents also, and give an account of their conduct, and of every circumstance which the king wishes to be informed of. They who acquit themselves to his satisfaction, have the honor to receive some mark of his approbation; which is generally a large cotton cloth, manufactured in the *Eyo* country, of excellent workmanship, which they afterwards wear for an upper garment. The black merchants, or trading men, and indeed every head of a family must also attend for a few days, and bring a quantity of *cowries*, proportioned to their circumstances: each of them endeavours to make his present (which is in fact a *tax*) as respectable as he can; and would be reprimanded, or perhaps punished, if he did not do so. They are all attended by their domestics, and the

young fellows among them, who are desirous of having female companions, bring, each, the savings of their industry, if it amounts to *five cabefs*, or twenty thousand *cowries*, which they lay before the king's gate; and prostrating themselves in the dust, beg to be favored with wives; which is generally complied with. The females are handed out from the palace, and distributed among the petitioners; and the *cowries* received in return. Each must take the female that is assigned him; be she old, or young; handsome or deformed; he is obliged to receive her: sometimes, I have known the king's wives, who are the agents in this business, hand out in malicious sport, the man's mother to him, whom he must maintain afterwards; and wait, content, till his circumstances enable him to try his luck on some future occasion.

The state principles from which this mode of supplying wives is derived is, that "*parents have no sort of property in their children in the Daboman territories:*" they "*belong entirely to the king,*" and are taken from their mothers, at an early age, and distributed

buted in villages remote from the places of their nativity ; where they remain subject to *his* future appropriation of them, with but little chance of their being ever seen, or at least, recognized by their parents, afterwards. The motive for this, is, that there may be no family connections, or combinations ; no associations, that might be injurious to the king's unlimited power. Hence, each individual is detached, and unconnected ; and having no relative for whom he is interested, is solicitous only for his own safety ; which he consults, by the most abject submission, and obedience. Here, paternal affections, and filial love scarcely exist. Mothers, instead of cherishing, endeavour to suppress those attachments for their offspring which they know will be violated, as soon as their children are able to undergo the fatigue of being removed from them.

On the annual return of the *Customs* (at which *all* must attend, unless prevented by sickness), every person being immediately in the king's power, they who have been guilty of any delinquency, are apprehended without

out any trouble ; and an inquiry into small offences is frequently deferred to that time ; but on a suspicion of crimes that merit immediate inquiry, such as imprudent familiarity with the king's women ; witchcraft, or theft ; the offender is visited by certain messengers, called *half-heads* ; (from having one half of their heads shaved, and the hair permitted to grow to its full length on the other ; which, with half a dozen strings of human teeth that reach from the right shoulder across the breast and back to the opposite knee, gives them a strange appearance) these messengers hear the merits of the case before the magistrate of the town ; and if the offence is proved, they either carry the criminal's head with them, in a bag, to shew the king that sentence has been executed ; or conduct him to the capital, to receive his punishment there.

At this time too, the king informs himself particularly, of the behavior of each of his slaves ; the meanest of whom have access to him upon this occasion ; and, if injured, has an opportunity of applying personally, and in private for redress ; which is a check on
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the conduct of those in power, and, no doubt, prevents them from oppressing their inferiors. There are indeed but few instances of personal injuries in this country; for as they are *all* slaves to the king, those who enjoy any pre-eminence are cautious how they abuse their fellow slaves, lest they incur the displeasure of their common master: and from this terror, in quarrels between equals, they content themselves with expressing their indignation in mutual invective; and rarely proceed to blows, lest a *king's slave* should be hurt; which would be of serious consequences to the aggressor.

I was suffered to remain uninterrupted in my apartments the day after my arrival, to recover from the fatigue of the journey; except, that towards evening, an old man begged leave to come in; and approaching with great respect, produced a small calash, containing a few pebbles, which he turned out upon the floor, and, counting them deliberately over, shewed me there were fifteen of them; which, I recollected, was the *number of guns* that were fired on the preceding evening; and finding that he was
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the gunner, I paid him his perquisite of an *ackey of cowries*, and a flask of brandy; and desired him to shew me his artillery, to which he readily agreed, and conducted me to an open space in the town, where I found twenty-two two pounders, and two sixes, without any carriages; not arranged for defence, but lying on logs of wood, to be fired occasionally for salutes, and on public rejoicings.

The town is large, and may contain about *twenty-four thousand* inhabitants. It is built without any order, or the least regard paid to the regularity of the streets. A number of small huts for the women, and a shady piazza or two for the master, the whole inclosed with a high *mud wall*, form the accommodations of each family. It is situated upon a dry gravelly plain, and is supplied with water from a rivulet near two miles off, which makes that article dear; and a number of *women* are employed in carrying it round the town, in earthen pots, to sell. The town is surrounded by a wide and deep ditch, but has no breast-work; nor does it appear how they have disposed of the clay that has been dug out of it, unless it has been expended

expended in constructing the mud walls of their houses. There are, in different places, four *wooden* bridges across this ditch, and a guard house at each, in which some soldiers are stationed.

The king has two houses, called *Dabomy* and *Gringomy*, in the town, and another without the gates, called *Dampogey*; they are about the same dimensions as that at *Calmina*; and, like it, are inclosed by a *mud wall*, about twenty feet high. In passing the guard house at the door of *Gringomy* house I observed a great number of human skulls, fixed on small stakes on the roof of it: they were the heads of prisoners taken in war. On each side of the door was a pile of human heads, at least fifty in each; and at a few yards distance, opposite to the door, was a small stage about ten feet high, on which lay about two dozen heads of unfortunate victims, who had been sacrificed a few days before, at some of the late festivals.

On my return, I received a message from the king, who desired to see me next morning in *Dabomy* house. I prepared, accordingly, for my visit, by unpacking a very handsome

handsome sedan chair, and a chamber organ, which I had previously sent up from *Whydab*. These I sent early in the morning by my porters to the palace, and followed them, at ten o'clock, February 5, accompanied by my linguist. I was received at the door by *Maybou*; on each side of it was a human head, *recently cut off*, lying on a flat stone, with the face down, and the bloody end of the neck towards the entrance. In the guard house were about forty women, armed with a musket and cutlafs each; and twenty eunuchs, with bright iron rods in their hands; one of whom slipped away, to announce my arrival; and *Maybou*, walking cautiously forward, conducted me through the first court to a door, near which were two more heads; where, he prostrated himself, and kissed the ground; on which it was opened by a female, and we entered a second court, two sides of which were formed by long shady piazzas: in this we were met by *Tamegab* and *Eubigab*, who, with *Maybou*, frequently knelt down, and kissed the ground, pronouncing aloud some of the king's titles, as we walked across this court, in which were ranged six human heads.

heads. From this we passed through a third door into the court, where the king was seated, on a handsome chair of crimson velvet, ornamented with gold fringe, placed on a carpet, in a spacious cool piazza, which occupied one side of the court. He was smoking tobacco, and had on a gold laced hat, with a plume of ostrich feathers; he wore a rich crimson damask robe, wrapped loosely round him; yellow slippers, and no stockings: several women were employed fanning him, and others with whisks, to chase away the flies: one woman, on her knees before him, held a gold cup, for him to spit in.

When the door, which led into this court was opened, *Tamegab* and his two companions immediately fell down, rubbed their foreheads in the dust, kissed the ground repeatedly, and approached the king crawling on their hands and knees, prostrating themselves frequently, and throwing the dust plentifully with both hands upon their heads: had it been mud from preceding rain, the same ceremony would have been performed.

Having bowed to the king, I was directed

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to a chair a few yards from him ; and having drank his health in a small glass of brandy, and he mine, he inquired after the health of his brother, *King George of England* ; and asked some questions respecting my voyage. We conversed through the medium of my servant, who acted as interpreter, and *Maybou* ; who first kissed the ground, before he presumed to repeat the king's words to my servant : a custom always observed in every part of the country, as well as in the royal presence, when a person has occasion to repeat the king's words, or deliver any message or order of his. After some conversation, he desired me to let him hear the organ, and appeared much pleased with the tunes. I then explained the use of the sedan chair, which I represented as much more convenient than hammocs, which he generally used. Half a dozen of his hammoc men were then introduced, crawling on their hands and knees ; and by his desire, I went into the sedan, and directing them what to do, was carried by them all in turns, until they appeared to be pretty expert at their business : he then went into it himself, and was carried

ried repeatedly round the court, amidst the shouts and acclamations of his ministers, his women, and his hammoc men. It was a smart showy thing, covered with red morocco leather, and lined with white silk. He was astonishingly delighted with it, and diverted himself with opening and drawing the curtains, which he deemed a most ingenious contrivance ; at last, in the exultation of his soul, some of the eunuchs were called in to supply the place of the hammoc men, and the door leading from the piazza to his private apartments being opened, he was carried by them to display his finery among his women ; and I had permission to depart : his nobles retiring in the same abject manner which they observed in approaching him. In the evening, I purchased thirty-two slaves, which finished the business of the day.

On the next morning (February 6) I had an invitation to come, if it was agreeable, and be a spectator of some *amusements* at the king's gate, at *Gringomy*, which I accepted, as I understood that *Agaow* (the general) had returned, in the preceding night, from an expedition against the *Mabees*, and had

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brought some prisoners, which I wished to inquire about. I found *Tamegab*, *Maybou*, *Eubigab*, *Agaww*, and *Jabou* seated on stools, placed on leopard's skins, at the king's gate, and sheltered under large umbrellas from the sun. An accommodation of the same sort was provided for me. A large concourse of people was assembled, but I found it was not a time, or place for business, so entertained myself with the droll distortions, and antic dances of a multitude of people, to the harsh music of a variety of instruments: amidst all this festivity, should a man's foot slip, and should he tumble and get a fall, which are regarded as bad omens, the poor wretch is immediately taken out of the crowd, and his head is struck off, without any interruption to the dance, which goes on, as if nothing had happened. To these succeeded a troop of about two hundred and fifty females, whose motions and grimaces were still more comic, if possible, than what had preceded. This band was composed of ladies of pleasure, ordered to be such by royal authority. This is a precaution taken by government to prevent the peace of private families being violated,

violated, and is perhaps more necessary here, than in any other state; as *adultery* is severely punished, and every indiscretion of gallantry, exposes the delinquents to *death*, or *slavery*; especially too, as the people of rank, engross the major part of the women. The king's seraglio consists of between three and four thousand; his principal men, have from one to three or four hundred wives each; and people in humbler stations from half a dozen, to twenty: from this unequal distribution, in which the rights of mankind are infringed, and their wants egregiously miscalculated, the lower class remain unprovided with female companions; but in every town there is a certain number of women, proportioned to its size, who are to be obliging to every customer that offers: the price of their favors is regulated, and very moderate; and though these poor creatures pay a heavy tax annually, which was the occasion of their being convened at present, yet by having small beer, and breeding poultry added to what their occupation brings in, they are enabled to live; and I am inclined to think there are wretches in

the world, of the same profession, more miserable than they are.

Whatever entertainment this scene might afford, was damped, by my servant's officiously pointing out seven horses, and the same number of men with their ankles and wrists secured round tall posts fixed in the ground; where they were to remain, till the night preceding the next festival; when, both men and horses were to have their heads struck off: these unhappy victims, though conscious of their impending fate, were not indifferent to the music, which they seemed to enjoy, by endeavoring to beat time to it. I soon took my leave and quitted this scene of distress; but had not proceeded far, before I was almost suffocated by an insupportable stench; which, upon looking round, I found to proceed from the heads of *thirty-two horses and thirty-six men who had been massacred on two preceding festivals*, not for any crime of theirs, but as a sacrifice to the mistaken grandeur of the king, and agreeable to *custom immemorial*. Directing my course from thence towards the market place, I found at the entrance of it two gibbets, about

about twenty feet high; with a murdered man hanging naked by the ankles to each; and at the other end of the market, two other gibbets furnished in the same manner. These poor wretches, were put to death by blows of heavy clubs on the head, and had their privities cut close off, that the delicacy of the king's women, who had to march under them in procession on a festival, about eight days before, might not be offended. The birds of prey were tearing out their bowels, and devouring them piecemeal; which the natives looked at without the least emotion, only admiring the grandeur of the king, who could defray the expence of such exhibitions. I observed in the market, that the flesh of *dogs* was exposed for sale here, as well as in *Whydab*, in common with that of other animals.

February 7th. Early this morning I went to the gate of *Dabomy* house to see a procession of the king's women, who came out, in number about seven hundred, neatly dressed, and danced in the parade before the guard-house; where a number of men under arms were drawn up at a distance, to

prevent the populace from approaching them. Upon their retiring, *Agaow* advanced with about five thousand men under arms, who went through the various evolutions of their exercise; and concluded with a general dance, and some war-songs. After which I went in to pay my respects to the king, and by his desire played over the tunes on the chamber organ; it had three barrels, which made it rather too complicated a business for him. It played several agreeable tunes, and some select marches, but he preferred the *hundred and fourth psalm*; and I fixed the barrel, at his request, to that, for his future amusement.

February 8th. This morning I received a message from the king to wait on him in *Dabomy* house, which I did, and found him sitting in a piazza, dressed in a silk night-gown; having bowed to him, I was directed to a chair, where some slaves were ready to hold a large umbrella over me. The king was attended by his great officers of state, and the parade crowded with a multitude of the populace. At a little distance from me sat a dozen swarthy men with turbans on their heads,

heads, they wore loose cotton shirts made like surplices, long loose drawers or trowsers of the same, and Morocco leather slippers. These people are called here *Mallays*; they speak, and write Arabic, and are supposed to come from the northern part of *Africa*, from the confines of *Morocco*, and the states of *Barbary*. They travel to this, and other parts of *Africa* more remote (for they visit *Angola*), apparently from motives of trade; and yet I could not discover that they pursued any branch of it, that was of importance enough to be an object: they buy hides, and skins, which they tan and work into horse furniture, tobacco pouches, and other useful articles; and carry some small bales of skins back with them: whatever be the real motives of their journey, they behave with propriety, and are courteously received, and much respected wherever they come: they profess the Mahometan religion; and when their long lent of *Ramadan* is over, the king annually kills an elephant to feast them.*

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* These *Mullahs*, are noticed by Snelgrave, who on his visit

Soon after I was seated, the music, which, besides trumpets, flutes, and bells, consisted

visit at the camp of the former king of *Dahomy*, (*Guadja Trudo*) observed two of them, and was informed that they belonged to a far inland nation bordering on the Moors, and together with thirty eight others of their countrymen had been taken prisoners at different times, whilst they were trading from one country to another. They were in fact itinerant Arabs, possibly mongrels, expert in writing *Arabic*, and in the art of dyeing with a variety of colors, goat and sheep skins, which they manufactured into cartouch-boxes, bags for holding gunpowder and other uses. By these valuable talents they had so far attracted the admiration and esteem of their conqueror, that he treated them with extraordinary marks of favor. The title of *Mullabs* or *Mollabs*, which properly belongs to an order of Mahometan priests, whose office it is to supervise and controul the *Cadis*, may possibly be assumed to give themselves a greater air of dignity; and it is not improbable, but that under the unsuspected appearance of traders, they may be secretly employed as missionaries, to make known and spread the doctrines of the *Koran* among these interior black nations. If the negroes should ever be disposed to lay aside their own hereditary superstitions, it is hardly a doubt but they will embrace Mahometism in preference to any other religious system, because it allows polygamy, flatters their prejudices in many other respects, and will induce a conformity of faith and manners with their northern

fisted principally of a multitude of drums of various sizes, began to play, and a numerous crowd danced to this rough harmony. When one band was tired, they were relieved by another, and these by two more: after some time, a table was laid with abundance of good victuals, and I dined, as did also the *Mallays* at another. *Adaunzou* the king's eldest son and heir apparent, who knew me on former visits here, squatted down behind my chair; and condescended to receive a roasted fowl and some other things, which I handed to him from my table; but the king never eats in public; it is even criminal to suppose he ever eats, or that he is so much like other mortals as to want the refreshment of sleep. When the repast was over, the music was renewed, and the king advanced into the parade, followed by a guard of twenty-four women armed

thern and north-eastern neighbours. But as yet, they do not seem, in general, inclined to adopt a change. The remnant of the *Whydahs* who had escaped the edge of *Guadja Trudo's* sword, were abundantly thankful to him, for permitting them to continue in the enjoyment of their *snake-worship*.

each

each with a blunderbuss, where he danced some time, to convince his subjects of his health and activity, to their inexpressible joy and satisfaction; which they manifested in the loudest acclamations. He then testified his approbation of the performance of his musicians, by rewarding them with eighty ounces* of cowries, which were brought in by three hundred and twenty of his wives, each carrying a *cabets*, or four thousand of them in a brass pan, which they distributed to the drummers, who departed, highly satisfied; and I also took my leave and withdrew.

February 8. On my arrival this morning at *Gringomy* house, I found a vast concourse of people assembled. I was received by *Maybou*, who conducted me into a spacious parade; on each side of the entrance, were three human heads that had been cut off the night before; and in the centre was erected a lofty tent, shaped like a sugar loaf, about fifty feet high and forty feet wide; it was open below, and rested on a circular

* An ounce is about forty-five pounds.

range of small iron rails, through which the king could have a view of what passed in the parade. He soon made his appearance, and seated himself (amidst the shouts and acclamations of the people) under his tent, on an elegant armed chair, covered with crimson velvet, and ornamented with carving and gilding. I was placed under the shade of a large umbrella, the *Mallays* on my right, and about thirty eunuchs, with each a bright iron rod in their hands, and dressed like women, on my left hand: after the music had played about half an hour, with the confused noise of which, and the shouts and songs of the multitude, I was almost stunned: a droll Harlequin entertained the king with an odd sort of dance, and fired occasionally a blunderbuss with five barrels, which gave the king so much satisfaction, that he sent him five *cabefs* of *cowries*.

The procession then began with a guard of an hundred and twenty men, carrying blunderbusses, who marched out two abreast: next, fifteen of the king's daughters, fine comely women in the bloom of life, attended

tended by fifty female slaves: after them marched in regular order, one by one, seven hundred and thirty of his wives, bearing provisions and liquors for an entertainment in the market place: these were followed by a guard of ninety women under arms, with drums beating. A table was then laid, and I breakfasted, whilst the procession continued: six troops advanced, of seventy women each; a distinguished favorite walked under an umbrella at the head of each. She who led the van was so universally respected, as to be too sacred to be seen; in fact, they secured her effectually from my sight with the umbrella, and certain long targets of leather, covered with red and blue taffata, with which they encompassed her: in the last troop were two umbrellas, and four favorites, very fine women, who were said to be in higher esteem with the king than any, except the lady before mentioned. All these entertained the king with their songs and dances as they passed; and the favorites went into the tent to pay their respects, and received considerable presents of *cowries* from him. They were succeeded by ten bands of his

his

his younger children, fifteen in each, from about seven to fifteen years old, each band consisting of those that were nearly of the same age and size. Seven troops of fifty women each followed next, each troop preceded by two English flags: these, like the former, amused his Majesty with their songs and droll dances: four of them particularly engaged my attention: their dress was too extravagant to be described; and each had a long tail fixed to her rump, which seemed to be a slip of leopard's skin, sewed up and stuffed; which, by a dexterous wriggle of their hips they whirled round with surprising velocity, like a sling. These likewise had a share of their master's bounty, and marched off laden with *courries*. Besides these, there were fifty or sixty women employed about his person, going on messages, and distributing presents, which he dealt about him with a liberal hand.

When the women had marched out, the eunuchs began their songs in the king's praise; enumerating his titles, and proclaiming his grandeur and actions, in terms of the most fulsome adulation: which continued until
the

the women had made the necessary preparations for him in the market place : then the king retired, and the procession began in the following order. First, two coaches drawn by twelve men each ; next, the sedan chair, and then three hammocs screened from the sun by large sumptuous umbrellas of gold and silver tiffue, and covered with canopies of the same. Each of these was surrounded by a very strong guard ; and the king was in one of them, but whether in coach, chair, or hammoc, would have been presumptuous, even criminal, for any of the attendants to venture to guess. My hammoc followed, and then five other hammocs, belonging to the great officers of the state, accompanied by an immense crowd of attendants and spectators. We proceeded through *Ajawbee* market, directly under five gibbets, with a man hanging to each, as described before, who had been murdered in the preceding night for that purpose. We then entered a large parade, inclosed with different kinds of cloth, extended on rails, to keep off the populace ; adjoining one end of it was a higher inclosure of finer cloth for the king.

None

None came into the large parade but *Tamegab*, *Maybou*, *Eubigab*, *Agaow*, and *Jabou*, and their attendants, except myself, and servants; and here I sat down to a dinner which would have served an hundred more. After I had dined, *Tamegab*, &c. attacked the remainder; and the crowd without were so well supplied with victuals, and brandy, that every one of them was fully satisfied: in the evening I had permission to visit the king, and having passed half an hour with him, returned to my quarters sufficiently tired with the noise and fatigue of the day. On my way I passed by the place where I had seen the seven men and the like number of horses tyed two days before: they were now gone, and I was told were murdered on the preceding night; but that those upon the gibbets, and the heads in the king's house, were none of them.

Nothing material occurred on the three ensuing days, which I employed in purchasing some slaves and ivory; but on the 12th I was summoned again to court, to attend another festival: only four human heads were placed at the king's door upon this occasion. The dances and the procession were
nearly

nearly the same as before, except that the dresses and ornaments of the women were much more showy : the variety, and abundance of rich silks, silver bracelets, and other ornaments, coral, and a profusion of other valuable beads, exceeded my expectation ; besides, there was added another troop of forty women, with silver helmets, and there was a display of the king's furniture and trinkets, most of the women carrying something or other of his ; some of them fine swords ; others silver-mounted guns ; above a hundred of them held either gold, or silver-headed canes, in their hands ; and that none might be unprovided, some carried a candlestick, and others a lamp, perhaps fifty at least of each, with many other articles ; which were all held up for the gaping multitude to admire. We dined, as before, in the market place ; and in the evening, when I went to wait on the king, a female dwarf was introduced to dance before him, in which she acquitted herself very well : she seemed to be about thirty years old, and measured only two feet seven inches high, was without any deformity, and tolerably well shaped.

During

During this day's amusements, we were visited by an *Harmattan* wind, which if described scientifically, would furnish a curious chapter in the history of winds: leaving that task to those who are more equal to it, I shall only endeavor to give some idea of its most striking *phænomena*.

On that part of the coast of Africa which extends from *Cape Verd* to *Cape Lopez*, there are, in the months of December, January, and February, frequent returns of a wind, from the north east, which is known by the name of the *Harmattan* wind. It, probably, may be felt further to the southward than *Cape Lopez*, but I cannot speak of what occurs in countries which I have not visited. It comes on indiscriminately at any hour of the day or night; at any time of the tide; or at any period of the moon's age; and continues a day or two; sometimes, five or six; once I knew it to continue a fortnight; and there are generally three or four returns of it every season. It never rains in an *Harmattan*; but it sometimes immediately succeeds a shower. It blows with moderate force; not quite so strong as the sea breeze

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which in the fair or dry season sets from the west, west-south-west, and south-west; but something stronger than the land wind which blows at night from the north, and north-north-west.

This wind is always accompanied with an unusual gloominess, and haziness of the atmosphere; very few stars can be seen through the fog; and the sun, concealed the greatest part of the day, appears only for a few hours about noon, and then of a mild red, exciting no painful sensation in the eye. No dew is perceived during the continuance of this wind; nor is there the least appearance of any moisture in the atmosphere. *Salt of Tartar*, dissolved in water, so as to run upon a tile, and exposed to the *Harmattan*, even in the night, becomes perfectly dry again in a few hours. Vegetables, of every kind, suffer considerably from it: all tender plants, and seeds just sprouting above the earth, are killed by it: the most flourishing ever-greens feel its baneful influence; the branches of the lemon, orange, and lime trees droop; the leaves become flaccid, and wither; and their fruits, robbed of their usual

usual nourishment, are cramped in their growth, and ripen, or rather appear yellow, and become dry, before they have arrived at half their usual size. Every thing appears dull and faded : the grass withers, and dries like hay ; of which circumstance the natives avail themselves, to burn it down in the vicinity of the roads ; as well to keep them open, as to destroy the shelter which it affords to wild beasts, or even to enemies that might lurk concealed in it. The covers of books, shut up closely in a trunk, and protected by lying among clothes, bend back as if they had been exposed to a fire ; the panels of doors, window shutters, &c. split ; and the joints of a well-laid floor, of seasoned wood, will gape so wide, that one may lay his finger in them : the sides, and decks of ships, become quite open and leaky ; and veneered work flies to pieces, from the contraction of the wood in different directions. If casks containing liquor, as wine, or spirits, are not frequently wetted on the outside, they generally lose their contents.

The air becomes considerably cooler in an *Harmattan* ; and the thermometer (*Faren-*

beit's) is generally ten or twelve degrees below the common standard. The *natives* complain much of the severity of the weather on these occasions, and clothe themselves in their warmest apparel, to guard against it; though that alteration is highly grateful to the *Europeans* resident in the country, yet *they* also feel many inconveniencies, in common with the *Blacks*: for the eyes, nostrils, lips and palate become disagreeably dry and uneasy: there is a necessity and inclination to drink often; not so much to quench thirst, as to remove a painful aridity in the fauces: the lips and nose become chapped and sore; and though the air is cool, there is a disagreeable sensation of prickling heat upon the skin, as if it had been washed with spirits of hartshorn or strong lye. If this wind continues five or six days, the scarf skin generally peels off from the hands and face, and even from the rest of the body, if the *Harmattan* continues a few days longer. Perspiration is considerably suppressed; but when sweat is excited by exercise, I have found it peculiarly acrid; tasting like spirits of wine diluted with water.

So

So far its effects on the animal and vegetable world are very disagreeable, but it is also productive of some good. The state of the air is extremely conducive to health: it contributes surprisingly to the cure of old ulcers and cutaneous eruptions: persons labouring under fluxes and intermitting fevers, generally recover in an *Harmattan*; and they who have been weakened and relaxed by fevers, and sinking under evacuations for the cure of them, particularly bleeding, (which is often injudiciously repeated) have their lives saved, in spite of the doctor. It stops the progress of epidemic diseases: the small pox, fluxes, and remittent fevers not only disappear, but they who are labouring under these disorders when an *Harmattan* comes on, are almost sure of a speedy recovery. Infection is not then easily communicated. In the year 1770, I had above three hundred slaves on board a ship in *Whydah* Road, when the small pox appeared among them; the greater part of these were inoculated, before an *Harmattan* came on; and about seventy of them underwent that operation a few days after it set in: the former got very well

through the disorder: none of the latter had either any sickness or eruption: we thought we had got clear of the disorder, but in a very few weeks it began to appear among these seventy: about fifty of them were inoculated the *second* time; the others had it in the natural way: an *Harmattan* came on, and they *all* recovered, except one girl, who had a malignant ulcer on the inoculated spot, and died sometime afterwards of a locked jaw. These salutary effects may probably be not universal, especially where the *Harmattan* may come laden with the noisome effluvia of a putrid swamp, which is not the case in *this* part of the country.

I am sorry to be obliged to dissent from such respectable authority as that of Dr. Lind, to whose labors we are so much indebted, for his valuable directions for preserving the health of seamen. I presume, his account of the *Harmattan* is derived from information, and not from his own observations, which are universally so just: had he experienced it in person, he could not have called it "fatal and malignant;" and that "its
"noxious vapour was destructive to Blacks

"as

“as well as *Whites*,” or that “the mortality
“which it occasioned was in proportion to
“the density and duration of the fog.” He
seems to confound the *salubrity* of the *Harmattan*, with those baneful effects to the constitution that follow the commencement of the *periodical rains* in April and May.

These rains are ushered in by hard gusts of wind, from the north east, and east-north-east, called *Tornadoes* (from a corruption of the Portuguese word *Trovoada*, a thunder-storm) which occur usually on the full and change of the moon, about the latter end of March, and in the months before mentioned: they are accompanied by severe thunder and lightning, and a very heavy shower of two or three hours continuance, which softens the surface of the earth, that had been parched up by the preceding *Harmattans*, and a succession of six or eight months dry weather in that burning climate, and gives an opportunity for the collected, stagnating and putrid vapors, confined under its arid surface, to rise and escape: these, volatilized by the solar heat, which beams forth with redoubled heat when the *Tornado* is

over, strike the nostrils with the most offensive stench imaginable, and occasion many bilious vomitings, fluxes, remittent and putrid fevers of the worst kind. Besides these, which are *annual*, there seems to be a collection of pestiferous vapor, which remains imprisoned for a longer period, and does not emerge above the surface oftner than once in five, six or seven years. The periods which I recollect to have been most fatal were in 1755 or 1756, when Governor *Melville* and most of the gentlemen and garrison of *Cape Coast* died; and in 1763 and 1769 *. The mortality in *some* of these years (for they were not all equally fatal to the *European* settlers) was so great, that, as Dr. *Lind* says, "The living were scarce sufficient to remove, and bury the dead."

The fog which accompanies the *Harmattan* is occasioned by an infinite number of small particles floating in the air: they are so minute as to escape the touch, and elude every investigation that I could devise: I could not succeed in attempting to examine them

* The year 1775 was also fatal to many.

by the microscope, though a part of them are deposited upon the grass, leaves of trees, and even upon the skin of the Negroes, and make them appear whitish, or rather greyish. These particles do not fly far over the surface of the sea: the fog is not so thick on board the ships in *Whydab* Road, at two or three miles distance from the shore, as it is on the *Beach*; and in proportion to the distance from the shore, the fog decreases: at four or five leagues distance from it the fog is entirely lost, though the wind is felt ten or twelve leagues off.

Upon a careful inquiry concerning the face of the country, I learn, that except a few rivers, and some swamps and lakes of no considerable extent, the country behind *Whydab*, for four hundred miles back, is covered with verdure, open plains of grass, with some clumps of trees, and some woods or forests. It rises with a gentle and gradual ascent, for about an hundred and fifty miles from the sea, before there is the appearance of a hill; and behind those hills I do not hear of any remarkable ranges of mountains. The surface is generally a loose sandy soil,

foil; below that a rich reddish earth, and not a stone to be found in it of the size of a walnut. I hear of no barren tracks of arid sand from whence those particles are likely to be detached by the *Harmattan*. Dr. Lind writes, that "The *Harmattan* is said to arise from "the conflux of several rivers about *Benin*:" but here, at *Abomey*, I felt it blowing from the north-east, stronger than I usually have elsewhere, and *Benin* bore from me, south-east; therefore the *Harmattan* was not likely to originate there. On the *Gold Coast*, it generally blows from the south-east; at the *Isles de Los*, a little to the northward of *Sierra Leone*, from the east-south-east; and at the river *Gabon* near *Cape Lopez*, from the north-north-east. The intersection of these points, or (what I would prefer) an *east* line drawn from *Cape Verd*, cut by a north-east one from the centre of the *Gold Coast*; and a north line from *Cape Lopez*, would, I think, point out a probable source for this extraordinary wind: but this is mere conjecture of my own.

As the business which brought me to *Abomey*, and respected abuses practised by the carriers of goods, who in bringing them
from

from the *beach* to the factories in *Griwbee*, pilfered considerable quantities of them, was in some measure effected, by the king's promising that he should take proper measures to prevent the like in future, I was now desirous to return; and acquainting the king with my intention to do so, as soon as the *Harmattan* should cease, took my leave of him. It continued blowing fresh for two days longer, which detained me, as the weather was too disagreeable for travelling. In the *interim*, a part of *Dahomy* house took fire, which greatly endangered the whole of it. As soon as the hurry occasioned by it was over, I was induced to wait again upon the king on this occasion, as a mark of respect. I observed, as I expected, much confusion and disorder in the house; several heads had been cut off, and lay scattered about to the number of *twenty* at least; and I found the king much irritated against his women; who were accusing each other of carelessness, and each endeavouring to remove the blame of it from herself. It probably was not easy to ascertain how the accident happened: and the king finding the investigation difficult, and his

his displeasure being perhaps somewhat appeased by the lives which he had taken away in the first impulse of his anger, he settled the business, by selecting *nineteen* of them whose residence was in the quarter where the fire broke out, and sold them to me for slaves. On the third day, the *Harmattan* ceased, and I prepared for my departure; previous to which, the king sent me a fat sheep, an anchor of brandy, and five *cabests* of *cowries*, towards defraying my expences on the road; and a present also, of a fine striped cotton cloth, and a handsome female slave.

I should have set off on my return to *Whydah* early in the morning of the 16th of February, which was the last day of the *Annual Customs*, on which the king distributes a profusion of presents among his people; but I was prevailed upon to remain till evening, at the request of my attendants, who hoped to pick up something in the scramble of the day. On this occasion, a large stage is erected near one of the palace gates, adorned with flags and umbrellas, and surrounded with a fence of thorns, to keep off the rabble; on this

this are piled heaps of filefias, checks, callicoes, and a variety of other European and Indian goods; a great many fine cotton cloths that are manufactured in the *Eyo* country; and a prodigious quantity of *cowries*. When all is ready, the king comes upon the stage, accompanied by any of the governors, or captains of ships, that may be there, and attended by *Tamegab*, *Maybou*, and a few others of his head men; to each of these he gives, according to their rank, the choice of an *Eyo* cloth, and a string of coral beads; his subordinate officers are then called over from among the crowd below, and receive each a piece of cloth, and some *cowries*, as a mark of their master's approbation and regard. The king then throws a bunch of *cowries* with his own hands among the crowd; on which, his women begin to fling the remainder of the goods indiscriminately among the multitude; in which the white men, if they please, and *Tamegab* and his companions assist; and finally, as some *cruelty* must accompany all their exhibitions, a man tied neck and heels, an alligator muzzled, and a couple of pigeons, with their wings

wings clipped, are thrown off the stage among the crowd, where a confusion, greater if possible than what has preceded, ensues, in scrambling for the heads of each, to the great amusement of the king; and whoever are lucky enough to carry off the prizes, which consist of the heads of the victims, are each rewarded with a handsome present. This is the last human sacrifice at the *Customs*, and is a part of the ceremony which the *Whites* never stay to see performed; but, if report may be credited, the carcase of the human victim is almost wholly devoured, as all the mob below will have a taste of it.

I reached *Agrimee*, on the borders of the wood, that night; and, after a few hours rest, rose before day to get through this fatiguing part of the journey before the heat of the morning, and did not halt until I got to my old friend *Jabrakou* at *Whybow*; with whom I spent that day, and a great part of the next: but could not stay to accompany him on a great buffalo hunt, for which he was preparing. I arrived at *Ardra* on the evening of the 17th of February, where an occurrence happened that might have terminated worse for

for us than it did. I had my hammoc slung in the white men's apartment, adjoining *Maybou's* house; and the weather being very warm, the hammoc men, porters, &c. chose to spread their mats, and lie in the piazza, and in the little court before it, in the open air: when we were all asleep, except the captain of the gang, who after taking a nap was regaling himself with a pipe, a leopard leaped over the wall, walked over those who were sleeping in the court, and, without hurting them, seized upon the fat sheep which the king had given me, that was tyed in a corner of the yard; and carried it off with him in an instant, over a wall eight feet high, before the man who saw him had time to get a shot at him.

The next day, February 18, 1772, I returned safe to my factory; and here my narrative should conclude, but I am tempted to waste some additional pages, in relating a few circumstances that occurred in my subsequent journies to *Dabomy*. I had occasion to visit *Abomey* again in December 1773: the king was then infirm, and sinking under years, as well as disease: he was confined to his

his room, but would see me ; which gave me an opportunity of inspecting his private apartment. He had a neat detached room for sleeping in, which was separated from the court, in which it stood, by a wall about breast high, the top of which was stuck full of *human lower-jaw bones* ; and the little area within it, was paved with *skulls*, which, I understood, were those of neighbouring kings, and other persons of eminence and distinction, whom he had taken prisoners in the course of his wars ; and had been placed there, that he might enjoy the savage gratification of trampling on the *heads* of his enemies, when he pleased. He did not long survive this interview, but lingered on to the 17th of May 1774, when he died aged about seventy years ; of which he had reigned about forty ; and was succeeded by his son *Adayn-zou*.

A horrid scene commences in the palace, the moment the king expires ; which continues until *Tamegab* and *Maybou* have announced that event to his successor, and till he takes possession of it : this he loses no time in doing, that he may put an end to the mischief

chief going on there. The wives of the deceased begin, with breaking and destroying the furniture of the house, the gold and silver ornaments and utensils, the coral, and in short, every thing of value that belonged either to themselves, or to the late king, and then *murder one another.* *

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Adaunzon,

* *Esfman*, an author of established credit, speaking of the customs at *Whydah*, prior to its conquest, relates, that
 “ upon the death of the king of that country, and as soon
 “ as it was publicly known, every person fell to stealing as
 “ much as he could of his neighbour’s goods, without be-
 “ ing liable to any punishment. This scene of rapine and
 “ confusion continued till a *new king* was confirmed on the
 “ throne; who, by public proclamation, forbid it, and
 “ was instantly, and strictly obeyed.” He adds, “ that
 “ the succession to the crown seemed to depend on the great
 “ officers, and their adherents; so that the younger brother
 “ was frequently elevated to that rank, in exclusion of the
 “ eldest.” The temporary anarchy and tumult usual in
 these countries whenever the throne became vacant by the
 death of the sovereign, may possibly have originated (as I
 have already hinted in a preceding note) in a design either
 to accelerate the choice of a successor, in order by that
 means to prevent a civil war; or, to confirm the popular
 attachment to a *monarchical* form of government, by dis-
 gusting them with the turbulence and licentiousness inci-
 dent to a *democracy*. But this is merely matter of con-
 jecture;

Adaunzon, upon being nominated king, hastened with his retinue to the palace gate, which he broke down, and taking possession of it, put a stop to the carnage; but, before he could accomplish this, a great part of the furniture, &c. was destroyed, and *two hundred and eighty five* of the women had been murdered. The sedan chair, however, remained entire, and *Abadee* was interred in it, accompanied, it is said, by *six* of his wives, who were buried alive with him, as were also all those who had been killed in the affray.

The new king inherited his father's propensity for war, and an opportunity soon offered for gratifying this passion. In the autumn of 1774, the king of the exiled *Whydahs*, who had fled from their country on the *Daboman* conquest, died. These people occupy a small, swampy territory, between *Whydah* and *Popoe*; and live in amity with the latter, who assist them in their incursions and depredations on the former. The *Dabomans*

ture; and, after all, might be no more, than would probably happen, upon setting any other slaves loose for a while from the awe of a controuling and despotic power, and during its suspension.

never

never fail to take some advantage of any dissensions that happen among these people ; and one now occurred on the death of their king ; for there were two competitors for the government : *Abavou* (or the *Swamp-Dog*), who was son to him who killed his own brother at *Xavier*, and ate his heart, as related in *Abadee's Memoirs* ; and another, who was equally related to the deceased, named *Eyee* (or the *Monkey*). The former had the most numerous adherents, and drove his rival out of the country ; *Adaunzou* determined to support his pretensions, without being at the trouble of inquiring into the merits of them, and sent an army to his assistance. *Abavou*, and his party, were obliged to fly in their turn. The *Dabomans* drove them off the main land in the first campaign, and compelled them to take refuge on an island called *Foudou-Cong*, or *Fèteesh-Island*, which is in a lagoon, or broad expanse of water, formed by a river in that country. There they remained inaccessible during the periodical rains, because the *Dabomans* had no canoes, and indeed know nothing of the management of them : but as soon as the waters subsided,

they began an arduous undertaking ; the army was reinforced with a prodigious number of men ; they cut down the trees on each side of the lagoon, of which they made piles, and carried on a bridge, or caufeway, on both sides, directly to the island ; and after a bloody conflict, in which many lives were lost, they carried it.

Abavou and his party retreated upon the lagoon in about eight hundred canoes, which they had with them ; but their escape was prevented by the *Dabomans* having previously piled the river across, a few miles below, where it was narrow, and by keeping possession of both shores. The *Whydabs* remained in this distressing situation for some months, without any other subsistence than what they derived from the fish in the river ; or by landing occasionally in force, and beating up some of the *Dabomans* in their quarters, where the assailants sometimes found a small supply of provisions.

At last, *Abavou*, seeing his people worn out with famine and fatigue, and no prospect of extricating them from their difficulties, resolved to surrender himself. He thanked his
followers

followers for their services, and told them, that the only return he could now make for their attachment and fidelity, was to deliver himself up, and endeavour to prevail on *Adaunzou* to accept *his* life, as a peace-offering for their safety : with this determination he came on shore, and was sent by *Agaorw* (the *Daboman* general) to the king, who ordered his head to be cut off. His adherents submitted prisoners at discretion, to be disposed of as the king pleased.

Although this transaction passed within a few miles of *Whydah*, and we could not fail of knowing every stage of it, for in fact there was nothing else to attend to (*as trade is entirely suspended whilst the country is at war*) yet *Adaunzou*, to gratify his own vanity, sent his *half-heads* to announce his victory to the governors of the forts there, and signified his wish, that they should testify their joy at the event, which was complied with, by firing a royal salute at each of the forts, and by every ship in the road.

Soon after this, he thought fit to send a messenger to acquaint me, that he wished to see me, and I waited on him towards the end

of December 1775. At our first interview, he asked me if I had ever seen *Abavou*? on replying that I had not, he added, "Then you shall now." I knew *Abavou* had been dead a month at least, and had no curiosity to see his remains; but did not think it advisable to oppose the king's intention. Some women, to whom he gave directions about it, soon returned from an inner apartment of the palace, carrying a wide, shallow, brass vessel, that contained a large bundle, much bigger than a bee-hive, which was ornamented with two small silk flags, each about the size of a handkerchief. This bundle was composed of various folds of cloth, the uppermost of cotton; within them were several silk wrappers, which being removed, *Abavou*'s head made its appearance, lying in a china basin. It was in perfect preservation, as dry as an *Egyptian* mummy, and the hair smartly dressed. "*That is the fellow,*" said the king, "who gave me so much trouble." I replied, You seem to take good care of him, now you have him. "Yes," said he, "I am a warrior myself, and if I should fall into the enemies' hands,

"hands, could wish to be treated with that
"decency, of which I set the example."

He ordered a great number of the prisoners, who had surrendered on the late occasion, to be shewn to me. I declined purchasing any of them, as they were much emaciated, and appeared to be sickly. "Since
"that is the case," said he, "I shall put them
"to death." I endeavored to dissuade him from that resolution, and recommended that he would make them *boilers of salt*, as they came from the country which supplied him with that article; or to employ them in some other way. He said, "it would be setting a
"bad example, and keeping people in the
"country, who might hold seditious language: that *his* was a peculiar government,
"and that these strangers might prejudice
"his people against it, and infect them with
"sentiments incompatible with it." I really cannot say what was at last the fate of these poor people; I know they were *not* kept for *salt boilers*, and doubt not some of them were purchased afterwards (when their health and strength were recruited), for slaves for the *West Indies*; but those who did not find

purchasers would undoubtedly be put to death: and the *Annual Customs*, which were then at hand, would produce a demand for two or three hundred of them; to "water
" with their blood the graves of *Adaynzou's*
" ancestors."

A P P E N D I X.

I SHALL beg leave to add, by way of supplement, a few particulars, which have some connection with the preceding narratives. It has been seen, that the *Dahoman* conquests have extended chiefly over the maritime states—a circumstance, which might appear singular, if we were only to regard the comparative civilization of those states, in consequence of their intercourse with Europeans, and the ready supply of fire arms and ammunition to be obtained from
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that commerce, for their defence: but the truth seems to have been, that in proportion as these states became improved in civilization, and addicted to agriculture and trade, they declined from their ancient ferocity of temper: they had grown voluptuous and effeminate, and lost every spark of martial fire. The kingdom of *Whydah*, though capable of mustering with ease two hundred thousand effective militia, employed none but mercenary soldiers for its protection. On the other hand, the interior nations continuing unaltered in their manners, were not to be subdued by the *Daboman* armies. The borderers on this kingdom are the *Eyos* or *Eyoes* on the eastern side, between *Dabomy* and *Benin*; the *Mabees*, on the western; and the *Tappas*, whose country lies contiguous to the *Eyos*. The latter are a very spirited nation, and first gave a check to the ambition of *Guadja Trudo*. They are probably the *Taboos* of Snelgrave, who perhaps had borrowed this name from *Swift's* Gulliver, which was cotemporary with his publication. Their form of government is not very different from that of *Dabomy*, from
which

which their despot, until very lately, exacted a yearly tribute for many years, as the price of peace. They cultivate cotton, and a species of grass, and manufacture both into clothing, for the use of the natives. Their traders likewise deal largely in slaves, which are disposed of to the factors of *Dabomy*. The *Mahees*, as I have before hinted, are a powerful confederacy of many united and independent states; whose form of government seems to be of the feudal kind. Their leading men possess vassals or slaves; but do not treat them with the *Daboman* asperity. Nevertheless, they sell slaves in considerable numbers to the *Daboman* factors. But revolutions happen so frequently, and from such trivial causes, among these barbarous nations, who have not yet discovered the means of constituting, by regular offensive and defensive treaties, a political balance of power, for their mutual preservation and tranquility, that they cannot be supposed to enjoy anything like a settled form of government: it fluctuates with the alternate successes of invaders and usurpers. The *Eyos* are even now engaged in hostilities against
the

the *Mabees*, with the usual fury of savages. At the commencement of the last periodical rains (in *May* 1788) they had ravaged no less than fourteen districts; and, burning and destroying multitudes of towns and villages, continued their progress with such devastation and horror, that the tyrant of *Dabomy* was not without violent apprehensions for his own safety. Of the *Tappas*, but little is known. It is supposed they are the same nation which is mentioned by Snelgrave, by the name of *Tuffos*, a large party of whom having been surprized and routed by the forces of *Guadja Trudo*, eighteen hundred captives were brought to the royal encampment, and of this number no less than four hundred were instantly sacrificed. The remainder were either kept or sold as slaves. This nation, however, must have acquired considerable importance, as they drew a regular tribute from the *Eyos*.

The language commonly spoken in the *Daboman* empire is the *Ajirab*, which is the proper dialect of *Ardrab*, whose dominions formerly extended from the river *Volta* to *Lagos*. Throughout the same tract of country

try it prevails at this day, though corrupted a little, it is true, with some provincial idioms and variations, occasioned by an intermixture of different people. *Ajirab* was once a large and populous town, before the subversion of the kingdom of *Ardrab* by the *Dabomans* in 1724. It is even at present no contemptible place. Its distance from *Griwbee* or *Grigue*, (the capital of *Whydah*) is about seven hours. I used to compute, that the hammoc men carried me at the rate of *at least*, five miles per hour, in general. But that part of the road indeed which lies through the great wood (marked upon the map) is so extremely bad, that I am certain my rate of travelling did not exceed four miles per hour, during the five hours I employed in crossing it. *Whydah*, in its ancient state, and before it became a province to *Dabomy*, was bounded on the western part by *Popo*. It ranged along the shore about nine or ten miles; but in its inland division, from ten to twelve miles in breadth (though in some parts rather less), and contained about sixty thousand square acres. So very populous was it, that in one village only, were
computed

computed as many inhabitants as are commonly found in an entire kingdom on the *Gold Coast*. There were many of these large villages equally well stocked, besides innumerable small ones; most of which lay at a very small distance from each other. The king assured *Bosman* (about the year 1693) that one of his vice-roys, with his sons and grand-sons (and not reckoning any of his female descendants) made up a body of *two thousand* persons, all of whom were then living. This, however marvellous it may sound in *our* ears, was not thought at all incredible by those to whom it was mentioned, because the common men in general had from forty to fifty wives each; and their superiors from three to four hundred, and some of them even one thousand: the king himself maintained a *baram* of between four and five thousand. Most of these women were employed in tilling the ground for their respective husbands. Such among them as could boast pre-eminent beauty, which elevated them to the rank of favorites, remained at home, yet were not entirely excused from servile duties, but waited upon
their

their husbands. Besides agriculture, they were also occupied in spinning cotton, weaving cloths, and brewing *pitto*, a kind of beer (which was the ordinary drink), in dressing victuals for sale, and carrying merchandises to the market *. The men practised, though rudely, the arts of forming domestic utensils with the shells of the *calebass* fruit; *bassagyes* (or javelins), and several other articles. They were the most wealthy and the most enlightened blacks on the slave coast; an improvement chiefly effected by a long habit of intercourse with Europeans of several different nations. *Sabee*, at that period the metropolis of the kingdom, the residence of their monarch, and seat of their commerce, was above four miles in circumference. The houses, constructed with mud walls, were roofed with thatch. The factory houses of the European traders were spacious and airy, distributed into convenient apartments, and surrounded on the outside with a large gallery opening into balconies. The

* The natives assigned as a reason for using an artificial beverage, that the water of their wells was too chilly, to be swallowed without danger.

town swarmed with people, infomuch, that it was impossible to pass through the streets without great difficulty. Markets were held every day, at which were exposed to sale all sorts of merchandizes, European and African, besides abundance of provisions of every kind. Adjacent to the factories was an extensive space, adorned with beautiful and lofty trees, which afforded a refreshing shade to the governors, factors, and captains of vessels belonging to Great-Britain, France, and Portugal. Here they walked every day, and discoursed of their affairs. The prodigious number and variety of tall and lovely trees, which seemed as if they had been planted on purpose for decoration; the drains which intersected the country, and were unincumbered with briars, or noxious plants (so unlike what one sees in other parts of *Guinea*); fields of the liveliest verdure, entirely devoted to culture, and separated only by a ditch, or a path; the plains embellished with an astonishing multitude of large and small villages, every one of which was inclosed with a low mud wall, and placed in full view of the surrounding district;—all
this

this assemblage united to form the most picturesque view imaginable, unobstructed either by mountain or hill. The country rising by a gradual, and almost imperceptible slope, to the distance of between forty and fifty miles from the margin of the sea, there was not a spot throughout the whole kingdom, which did not comprehend water within the limits of its prospect. Such was the landscape sketched by *Bosman*, and finished by *Smith*, who perhaps may have heightened its coloring with rather too licentious a fancy; for he had no opportunity of viewing the country with his own eyes, until some months after the utter demolition of the town, and desolation of the entire kingdom, by the barbarians of *Dabomy*. At the time of this voyager's arrival on the coast, the elysium had vanished; the fields lay uncultured, overrun with weeds, and strewn with human skeletons; and the very air of the place was poisoned with exhalations pestiferous to the lives of European visitors. But it is unquestionably a very fertile tract of land. The heat of the sun is almost insupportable by Europeans, yet *Whydah* is at present not
in

in all respects a disagreeable residence. The society of the gentlemen at the forts, is a pleasing relief in the hours of relaxation from business. The market is amply supplied; for the country abounds with deer, sheep, and excellent goats (whose flesh is as tender as mutton), hogs both wild and domesticated, variety of poultry, and plenty of good fish. Some beef is likewise attainable occasionally. * All these articles are sold at reasonable prices. A turtle weighing one hundred pounds weight, has been purchased for a single flask of brandy. So that a ship's company may be furnished here with fresh provisions in greater abundance, and cheaper than at any other part of the coast. Nor is it destitute of various productions, adapted to commerce, and manufacture. Among those which in a very imperfect survey of the country have struck the observation of European traders, are,

The, *Indigo* plant, which is exceedingly

* *Atkins* says, that a cow of three hundred pounds weight is reckoned a fine beast; and that the sheep weigh about twelve pounds weight. It is true they are small; but they are juicy and well tasted.

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common;

common; but which the natives have neither skill, nor disposition to prepare for a market.

Tobacco grows spontaneously in several places: this, no less than the former, requires the management of experienced Europeans, to bring it into a state adapted for sale.

Cotton is not only cultivated, but manufactured into cloth, for the use of the natives.

Pepper, of a species very similar, and indeed scarcely distinguishable in flavor from that of the East-Indies,

A small *berry* serves the natives as a substitute for sugar. It is in itself insipid in the mouth, but imparts a certain sweetness to whatever is eaten after it.

Palm Oil is another valuable production, and is exported from hence in large quantities for the use of the British wool-combers and soap-boilers.

Peltry, such as tyger and leopard skins, &c. are not of much importance. But if we consider the infinite profusion of other useful products scattered over this country by the hand of nature, we are forced to lament the
extreme

extreme indolence of the natives, who remain unconscious of, or indifferent to, the blessings which surround them.

The men sleep, and smoke; the women (upon whom the whole task of agriculture is enforced) put, once in the year, a little seed-corn into the ground: such is the general torpidity which characterizes this people, and which would seem to justify a common remark, that in Africa, in proportion as the soil is fruitful, the inhabitants are averse to labor.

Whydah, in its state of independence, and prosperity, before the *Daboman* invasion, is said * to have exported, pretty regularly, a thousand slaves per month, throughout the year. Its present export amounts only to about five thousand five hundred per annum. Thus, the conquest of it, by the king of *Dahomy*, has diminished the traffic in slaves; not by the substitution of one more innocent, but by a carnage, and depopulation, the most horrible that ever occurred, perhaps, in the history of mankind.

* See *Bosman*.

A SHORT
A C C O U N T
OF THE
AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE.

SECOND EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS.

AS the African Slave Trade has been of late the subject of public examination and of private discussion, a brief account of it may not perhaps be unacceptable to those who have had no opportunity of hearing the evidence that has been given at the bar of both houses of parliament, or leisure to peruse the various publications which the present inquiry has occasioned.

A trade for Negro slaves is carried on from the river Senegal in 16 deg. north latitude,

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to

to Cape Negro, in 16 deg. south: which comprehends a tract of near four thousand miles of sea coast; and includes the greatest part of the interior country, within the above limits, from the confines of Mount Atlas, across the immense continent of Africa, to Mozambique, on the eastern coast.

From the nations bordering on the rivers Senegal and Gambia, the emperor of Morocco procures annually recruits for his black cavalry; and his subjects are furnished from thence with whatever slaves they have occasion for. Caravans also travel from thence across the continent, to Upper Egypt, with considerable numbers of Negro slaves; who are forwarded from thence either from Alexandria, by sea, or marched through Asia Minor, to Constantinople. From the same country, including the districts towards the river Sierra Leon, slaves are collected for supplying the different states of Barbary; from the ports of which, some of these slaves are sent to the Morea, and to the Turkish islands in the Mediterranean: hence it is, that the African coast from Senegal to Sierra Leon affords, comparatively, but few slaves

to

to the European traders. From Mozambique, and the ports on the eastern coast of Africa, great numbers are sent to Persia, Goa, and other parts of the East Indies; and in proportion as the culture of the West Indian Islands, and of the European settlements in America, has been extended, a demand for the labour of African Negroes has regularly increased there; and now amounts to about eighty thousand annually: of which the British purchase about forty thousand; the French, twenty thousand; the Portuguese, ten thousand; the Dutch, six thousand; and the Danes, four thousand.—Of the forty thousand purchased by the British, about a twentieth part are calculated to die on the voyage; and three-fourths of those that arrive in the West Indies, are disposed of to the French and Spaniards; the remainder are distributed in the British islands, and, for the greater part, continue still in a state of nature. Jamaica will require an addition of five or six thousand slaves annually, for many years, to complete its cultivation. This is the case also, though in a less degree, of the islands of Grenada, Dominica, St. Vincent,

and some other places ; particularly the Bahamas and the Bay of Honduras : the Bahamas are now the retreat of the unfortunate Loyalists, who having been banished from the United States, have a virgin soil to work upon, which promises no ungrateful return, as soon as the necessary labourers can be procured ; and the Bay of Honduras affords an asylum to those British settlers, who have lately been obliged to abandon their possessions on the Mosquitto Shore.

When the prodigious demand for African Negroes, which has existed for time immemorial in Mauritania, Egypt, Persia, and the East, is considered ; and, in addition to that, the immense exportation of late years to America and the West Indies, it might be presumed, that a visible decrease of inhabitants would be the consequence of these annual drains ; but from the concurrent testimony of the most intelligent persons, who have visited that country, it does not appear that this speculation is justified by experience.

They who have been both in Africa and America, say that they have been struck with

with the appearance of nearly the same population as in the state of Virginia, in those parts of Africa that lie upon the Coast; and add, that from the best information which they could get, the interior parts are at least as fully inhabited, as those which they had an opportunity of seeing. Virginia comprehends about thirty thousand square miles, and, including the Negroes, is said to contain eight hundred thousand inhabitants: taking this for the basis of a calculation, it may reasonably be presumed that Negroland, which extends, as was mentioned before, from the Senegal to Cape Negro, and from the Atlantic eastward to the Indian Ocean, and contains, exclusive of Nubia and Abissinia, at least, four millions of square miles, cannot have less than one hundred and six millions of inhabitants; which are more than Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Italy, Holland and Switzerland collectively contain.

A late writer *, who was well acquainted with Africa, from his long residence there,

* The late Governor Hippley, of Cape Coast Castle.

has

has pointed out the very different circumstances of Europe and Africa, with regard to the advantages and disadvantages attending the propagation of the species in each. What numbers of both sexes, says he, are there in the European world, who grow up and die, without ever having children! The increase of luxury has always been an enemy to matrimony; and accordingly, we find many decline it from choice, and many from necessity. The vain are deterred from it, from an unwillingness to abridge any part of the splendor of their appearance; and the indigent, from a certainty of multiplying their necessities. The long absence of men from their wives, on account of trade and other avocations, to say nothing of war and its wasteful consequences, necessarily reduces the number of births. A state of servitude precludes a state of matrimony, in a great part of the community; for there are few who will keep a married servant of either sex; but above all, religion, in the Roman Catholic countries, strikes the heaviest blow at propagation. These, and other obstacles to marriage and population, which exist, and
are

are likely to continue in Europe, prevent a yearly recruit of at least some millions of people; yet under all these disadvantages, the number of its inhabitants are supposed to increase.

In Africa none of these impediments prevail: there we find desire, unchecked by the dread of want, taking its full scope. A turn to speculation, retirement and abstracted studies, resolutions of celibacy from disappointed love, unmarried servants, long voyages, and religious vows, are utterly unknown. Their wars are not attended with the same circumstances of destruction as ours*; and here are no impediments against pursuing the dictates of natural inclination. Polygamy is universally practised in Africa, and contributes greatly to its populousness. It would be hurtful to the population of Europe; where the number of males and females born is nearly equal, or at least differs only about as much as to make up for the number of the former that are cut off, by accident attending their active state: but in Africa,

* Long voyages, tedious imprisonments, shipwrecks, bombardments, &c. &c.

where

where no man goes without a wife from a scarcity of women, and in short an un-mated black man is seldom or never seen; where the richest men, having many wives, do not prevent the poorest from having one or two, the number of women must greatly exceed that of the men: nor is this a singular case, for the same happens at Bantam, and other parts of the East Indies, that lie in the same latitudes: besides the number of men every year slaughtered and sacrificed in Africa, there is a great majority of male slaves carried out of it, which still adds very much to the relative proportion of women left behind; so that there must be an advantage to population in admitting polygamy in a country, where almost every man may have two or three wives, and several, as many hundreds. Hence it is, that Africa can not only continue supplying all the demands that offer for her surplus inhabitants, in the quantities it has hitherto done, but, if necessity required it, could spare thousands, nay millions more, to the end of time, all of whom may be considered as rescued by

by this means from that certain death, which awaited them in their own country.

The vast country of Negroland is divided into a multitude of states, the greatest part of which have never yet been explored; but in those which have been visited by Europeans, the government is found to vary from the most absolute tyranny in some, to somewhat less despotic and oppressive in others. The bulk of the people are slaves to a few freemen; and in some states there is not an individual free but the prince: from every circumstance of intelligence and observation, the general state of the Negro, in Africa, is that of slavery and oppression, in every sense of the word. In *Dahomy*, the king is absolute master of the life, liberty, and property, of every person in his dominions; and he sports with them, with the most savage and wanton cruelty. Piles of their heads are placed as ornaments before his palace gates on festival days, and on every public occasion; and the floors leading to his apartment are strewed with their bodies, to impress those who approach him with respect and awe. The area before his bed-chamber,

chamber, is paved with the skulls of prisoners taken in war, that he may daily enjoy the savage gratification of literally trampling on the heads of his enemies. Parents have neither property, nor interest in their children, in the *Dabonian* territories; they belong entirely to the king, and are all taken, by his order, from their mothers, at an early age, and distributed in villages remote from the place of their nativity; where there is but little chance of their being seen, or, at least, recognized by their parents afterwards. His motive for this is, that there may be no family connexions, no associations that might be injurious to his unlimited power. Each individual is detached, and unconnected; and, having no relative for whom he is interested, is solicitous only for his own safety, which he consults by the most abject submission. There, paternal affections, and filial love scarcely exist: for mothers, instead of cherishing, endeavour to suppress those attachments for their offspring, which, they are certain, will be violated, as soon as their children are able to undergo the fatigue of being removed from

from them. Yet, this worst of slavery does not prevent population, as it, doubtless, would in any civilized part of the world, where liberty is prized above all other enjoyments. But the idea of slavery is different in an African. Had the Negro the love of rational freedom existing in his breast, it is next to impossible that he could act thus. But, alas! he knows nothing of this inestimable blessing, having never enjoyed it! The country which gave him birth, the soil from which he sprung, produce no such blossom; and, should it ever appear, which is highly improbable, instead of the fostering hand to bring it to maturity, the bloody and unrelenting arm of tyranny is ever ready to cut it down.

The credibility of these extraordinary facts does not depend upon mere hearsay: *Dabomy* is a maritime kingdom, in which the British, French, and Portuguese have been permitted to erect forts for the protection of their trade; and the veracity of what is here related, is authenticated by the indubitable testimony of many who have resided there, and have avowed it publicly.

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The Africans have been in the practice, from time immemorial, of selling their countrymen, and never entertained any more doubt of their right to do so, than we do of sending delinquents to Botany Bay, or to Tyburn; deeming it fair and just to dispose of their slaves, prisoners of war, and felons, according to their own established laws and customs. Great enormities they punish with death; but, unless it be in such despotic governments as *Dabomy*, few but criminals are sold to the Europeans, except prisoners taken in war; who would inevitably be put to death, did not a more profitable mode offer of disposing of them: and hence it is, that persons of some rank in their own country, sometimes become slaves in the West Indies and American colonies; but the house of bondage, strictly speaking, may be called a land of freedom to them: where, notwithstanding they do not enjoy pre-eminence, they may be comfortable; and where, although prevented from exercising cruelty on others, they are always protected themselves. Those who are guilty of theft, adultery, or the imputed crime of witchcraft,
if

if they escape death, are sold for slaves. To deter them from the commission of these crimes, their situation in foreign slavery is represented to be attended with the severest tortures; which, fortunately for them however, are not realized. Nor is it to be wondered at, in a country of so great extent, and so little civilization, that the greatest part of the Africans, brought to the European colonies, have been previously condemned to slavery, for acts of delinquency; since Great Britain alone, under the superior advantages of its religion, laws, and manners, produces annually above two thousand convicts.

Since the labour of African slaves has been found necessary for the cultivation of the soil in the tropical climates of America, from the utter incapacity of white people to undergo that fatigue, every European nation possessing colonies there, has been solicitous to acquire a share in this traffic; nor have the most scrupulous of them entertained a doubt of their right to purchase, what the Africans exercised a right to dispose of.

Among the adventurers in this trade, the

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British

British possess, at present, the greatest share. It was during the government of the commonwealth, that Negroes were carried, in any numbers, to the British West Indies, and then, chiefly to Barbadoes: a few indeed were brought to Virginia, by a Dutch ship, as early as 1620; but it was the Royal African Company, that first carried on, from England, a vigorous commerce to Africa, during the reign of Charles II. We may form an opinion of the magnitude of it, in its most flourishing state, prior to the revolution in 1688, by considering that the company employed thirty ships annually, which delivered about five thousand Negroes in the West Indies. The increase of it to its present state, may be attributed to the enterprising spirit of the merchants; to the superior address of those employed in the executive part of it; to the opulence of the manufacturers, which enables them to extend a credit to the former, beyond what can be had in any other country; and to the annual grants of parliament, for the maintenance of several forts, and factories in Africa. From these concurring circumstances, the British
planters

planters are supplied with Negroes, on more reasonable terms than their neighbours; and a large surplus is left, which is disposed of to the French and Spaniards for specie, and other valuable commodities.

The importance of this trade to Great Britain may be determined from the following considerations: it immediately employs about one hundred ships, which sail annually for Africa, with cargoes which amount nearly to a million sterling, and which are composed of the productions of the British settlements in the East and West Indies; and of British manufactures, to the value of seven hundred thousand pounds. The circuitous returns of these cargoes are computed at a million and an half. The artificers and mechanics employed at Liverpool alone, receive one hundred thousand pounds annually for labor and materials employed in equipping the ships engaged in it; and exclusive of the large sums paid for seamen's wages, the commissions and privilege of the captains and officers amount at least to fifty thousand pounds annually; which are generally realized there, and have contributed

greatly to the rapid increase of that commercial town.

The African trade, connected as it is with the West Indian commerce, and with the trade to the remaining continental colonies, and Newfoundland fishery, is of the utmost consequence to the employment of many thousands of our fellow subjects; to the naval power of Britain; and to the royal revenues; all which are conjoined by sympathetic ties. The value of three millions at least of domestic manufactures, exclusive of other merchandize, annually finds a profitable vent by means of the African and West Indian trades; and above five millions of property, arising from the labor of Negro slaves, employed in the West Indian islands, is yearly imported from thence; which contributes not less than a million and an half annually to the revenue of this kingdom. To carry on this immense traffic, and to supply these islands with lumber and provisions, from the continental colonies and Newfoundland fishery, gives constant employment to at least a thousand ships, and to above fifteen thousand mariners.

ners. To enumerate the fatal consequences that would inevitably ensue from a check given to this extensive commerce, much more the suppression of it, exceeds the present limits of this short sketch, but they shall be hinted in the sequel.

The adventurers in this trade, who have seen for near a century past, the Society for propagating Christianity, composed of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and many pious doctors of the established church, deriving, as masters, a yearly income from the labor of their Negroe slaves in the West Indies, which is appropriated to the increase of Christianity in the world, could not consider it as contrary to the spirit of the Scriptures, or to the principles of morality: nor could the adventurers regard this traffic as inconsistent with the natural rights of mankind, when they read in the statute of 9 and 10 of King William (which was made avowedly for extending the trade to Africa), "*That this trade was highly beneficial to this kingdom;*" a declaration of a king, who was the patron of liberty, and of a parliament that had vindicated

cated the natural rights of mankind; and when they read also in the stat. of 23 Geo. II. "*That the trade to Africa is very advantageous to Great Britain, and necessary to the plantations.*" Which act was made by a whig king, and a whig parliament; who, when they dissolved the late African Company, granted a large sum of money as a compensation for their rights, in order that a trade thus necessary and advantageous, might be carried on with greater energy and success.

Encouraged by these, and various other acts of parliament, which declared the African trade to be highly beneficial to this nation, many merchants engaged their fortunes in it; nor could they imagine the *purchase* of Negroes from those states of Africa (who have the same right to dispose of them as the parliament has to inflict the pains of banishment or death) or consider the *sale* of them as illegal, when they knew that many able lawyers, learned judges, and illustrious chancellors had expressly declared this purchase and sale to be lawful; and to have transferred to the master such a property as could not be affected by local changes, or subsequent

subsequent baptism: and when the adventurers know also, that in conformity to the declarations of these judges and lawyers, the statute of the 5th of his late and of the 13th of his present Majesty, subjected the Negroes in the West Indian islands, as well as the lands which they laboured, to the payment of all debts, owing either to his Majesty, or to any of his subjects; and directed these Negroes to be sold, like any other chattels, for satisfaction of such debts. In consequence of which, the five hundred thousand Negroes, now belonging to the planters in those islands, are pledged by the legislature, and by the nation, for payment of the debts that are due, either to the British merchants or manufacturers, or to the subjects of foreign princes; who, by a late act of parliament, have been encouraged and enabled to lend money to these planters, on the security of their lands, and of the labour of their Negroes.

Yet this trade, so highly beneficial to the adventurers, and important to the state; a trade sanctioned by the clergy, supported by the judges, and authorized by the laws,

has lately been condemned both in principle and practice. By the law and usage of parliament, the most trivial right of the most inconsiderable subject is never taken away, even for the public good itself, without a manifest necessity, and a full compensation. Yet an attempt has been made, and measures are unremittingly pursued, to deprive the British planters, merchants and manufacturers, of the advantage of this important traffic; and under a pretence of regulation, restrictions have already been proposed, which strike at its existence: but though the liberty of Negroes seems now to be the favorite idea, the liberty of Britons to pursue their lawful occupations should not be forgotten: for the principle which has raised the commerce and navigation of this country, and with them the landed interest and revenues of the kingdom, from inconsiderable beginnings to their present greatness, is the *right* which every man in it possesses, to carry on his own business, in the way most advantageous to himself and the society, without any sudden interruption in the pursuit of it; and the *conscientiousness* which
he

he has, of the steady protection of the laws, in the prosecution of what has been shewn to be legal.

At a time when neighbouring nations, our rivals in commerce as well as arms, are lavishing unprecedented bounties, to extend their African trade, and endeavor to promote it by every possible encouragement, an association has been formed here for the avowed purpose of *abolishing* it; who suffering themselves to be imposed upon, by lending too credulous an ear to that kind of information which they sought with more avidity than justice, without duly considering by what means, or by or from whom it was procured, have labored to inflame the passions, and prejudice the minds of the community, by various publications, containing the most gross misstatements of facts, and misrepresentation of characters. It is an easy task to draw in glowing colors, that imaginary picture of human woe, which shall excite compassion, and rouse indignation; and in this style of painting the solicitors for the abolition have almost succeeded to their wishes: by their personal assiduities, sub-

scriptions

scriptions, and publications ; by their circular letters to the mayors of corporations, and addressees to grand juries, they have raised the torch of civil contest in the realm, which may eventually spread the flame of resistance throughout the colonies. Their clamors have reached the legislature ; and they who are concerned in the trade, have been called upon to defend their rights and injured reputation, at the bar of both houses of parliament.

It has there appeared in evidence, that to *serve a particular purpose*, the mortality of the mariners, and of the Negroes, had been exaggerated beyond the bounds of probability and truth : that the African trade, so far from being destructive to the lives of British seamen, in the degree asserted, is, in fact, a nursery for training up men to that useful profession. * That this trade is carried on as much

* For it is in this trade alone that those, who are desirous of embracing a sea life, at an age too advanced to commence an apprenticeship, can find employment ; as the crews of vessels in any other trade, consist of seamen and apprentices only : but in this, one half at least of each ship's

much to the ease and comfort of those that are the subjects of it, and also of those who conduct it, as it is possible for human ingenuity to devise. That the ships employed in it, are so peculiarly constructed for the accommodation of the Negroes, as to be unsuitable for any other trade. That the opinion, which has been industriously propagated, of these ships being unequal to the numbers which were said to be crowded in them, is groundless; as appears from a survey and admeasurement of them, by an experienced naval officer appointed by government.* That on the voyage from Africa to the West Indies, the Negroes are well fed, comfortably lodged, and have every possible attention paid to their health, cleanliness,

ship's company is composed of landsmen, young men, who in two or three voyages acquire as much professional knowledge as qualifies them afterwards for any station of a sea life.

* In every instance of those ships which delivered their cargoes at the British West India islands, it appears that (to evade a duty upon tonnage which is paid there) their tonnage was reported at the custom houses, at one third or more below their real burthen.

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and convenience. That the captain's cabin is appropriated to the use of such as are sick; where proper care, and medical aid, are duly administered to them; and that, by an admirable regulation, the emoluments of the captains and officers, employed in this trade, are connected with, and depend upon, the health and good condition of those whom they have the charge of conveying. The mode of obtaining Negro slaves in Africa, has been demonstrated to be in a way perfectly fair, and equitable; by a barter with the natives. The crime of *kidnapping*, as it is termed, with which the traders to Africa have been reproached, proves to be extremely unfrequent: for the African committee, whose business it is to take cognizance of such an offence, and for which the law inflicts a heavy penalty, have reported, that only *one instance* of it has come before them in the course of near *forty years*. It has also been shewn, that, in consequence of this trade, many innocent lives are spared, that would otherwise be sacrificed to the superstitious rites and ceremonies of the country; many prisoners of war exempted from torture, and death; and the punishment

ment of many crimes commuted from death in Africa to life in America; and finally, that it is the lot of most of those that are brought to the Colonies, who, generally speaking, were slaves in their own country, only to exchange a black master for a white one. That the wars which have always existed in Africa, have no connexion with the slave trade, is evident from the universality of the practice of it between communities in a savage state. The oldest writers, as *Leo*, and others, have represented the Africans as living in a continual state of war, and rapine, long before the commerce with Europeans was introduced among them; and no man of sense can doubt but the same practice would still continue, if no trade existed, and with greater frequency. Besides the motives of ambition and resentment, which the African has, in common with other nations of men, the turbulent and irascible disposition of a Negro prompts him to harass and dispute with his neighbour, upon the most trivial provocations. Lured by the love of plunder, before he ever saw an European commodity (as the value of an article depends upon the estimation

tion it holds in the fancy of him who covets it), the rude productions of the country, the trinkets of gold, or ivory, &c. were as much the objects of his desire formerly, as the acquisition of European manufactures can be at present. So far are the Whites from being accessary to these wars, as has been unjustly alleged; it is notorious, that the Europeans trading there, deprecate a war as the greatest inconvenience that can happen to them: trade is entirely suspended during its continuance; and the term of their voyages is thereby protracted much beyond the usual time. Hence arises an inevitable increase of expence, and an additional risk of sickness and mortality, which cannot be compensated by a few additional slaves, that may occasionally be brought to market in consequence of it. The assertion, that farther supplies of slaves from Africa, are not necessary to the cultivation of our islands, scarcely merits a serious refutation. It is dictated by the same mistaken policy, that preferred the wilds of Canada, at the close of a former war, to the possession of the truly valuable Sugar Islands; which, after being wrested from our enemies
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and rivals, at the expence of much blood and treasure, were again restored to them in an evil hour. But are no new settlements to be made, nor old ones to be extended? Is industry to be limited, and improvement prohibited, in the most valuable of all our foreign possessions; where a supply from propagation alone, adequate to the services required, is never to be expected. And are princely territories, millions of property, to be hazarded upon crude experiments? of whose success some few may possibly hope; but of whose failure few indeed can have a doubt?

How the Negroes, occupied in the Colonies, are now treated, remains next to be considered; and cannot be better related than nearly in the words of a respectable writer*, who has very lately favored the public with his observations on this subject.

Negro property is an object of such value and importance to the proprietor, that he is disposed to cherish it by every prudent and humane method; independent of what he owes as a man, and a Christian, he feels an

* Hector M'Neil, Esq. of Jamaica.

adventitious affection for it, resulting from interest. Hence it is, that the happiness and misery of Negroes, in the West Indies, depend almost totally on themselves. If a Negro is slothful or flagitious, he is, like rascals and drones of society in every well regulated community, poor and miserable; and subject to correction, as a punishment for his own vices, and for the instruction of others: but, on the contrary, if he is industrious in his own concerns, and attentive to the interest of his superior, mild in temper, and tractable in disposition, he is entitled to indulgencies, which thousands, even in this country, would be happy to enjoy.—The habitations of the slaves, on every estate, are situated near the dwelling-house of the owner, or overseer; that they may be under more immediate inspection. These are, in general, comfortable and commodious; with a garden to each, encircled with plantain, banana, and orange trees: and stocked with roots and vegetables, for domestic uses; and, even a large surplus to spare, which is carried occasionally to market, those little necessities and luxuries, which they wish
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to enjoy. Besides this, there is a portion of land on every estate, called the *Negro-grounds*, of which each slave is allowed as much as he can cultivate, for his own use. This land, from the fertility of the soil, requires only a small portion of occasional labour; a few hours in a week is sufficient, and the Negro is allowed, independent of every Sunday, which he has to himself throughout the year, one day in a fortnight, for * eight months of it, for cultivating his grounds. In these habitations, there is an arrangement of apartments, and propriety of furniture; a supply of utensils; and even a parade of apparel, little to be expected in the possession of slaves. They have each their styes of hogs, and little flocks of poultry; some of them reserved for sale, and the rest appropriated to their evening's repast; this, with a comfortable night's rest, enables them to return with vigor to the next morning's work, which, however strange it may seem, is not so hard as that of most of the laboring poor in Britain. But what

* Crop-time occupies the other four.

renders the situation of the Negro peculiarly comfortable, is the provision made for him during sickness, and old age. On the first symptoms of indisposition, he is instantly exempted from all labor, and lodged in a house particularly constructed for the purpose, where he is visited daily by a practitioner of medicine; supplied with fresh viands, vegetables, and even wine; attended constantly by a nurse, who acts likewise as an under medical assistant, and is not desired, or even allowed to resume labor, until his health and strength enable him to undergo its fatigues. Let indisposition continue never so long; no immediate loss, no confusion or derangement in his little property, is the consequence. Poverty, want, and affliction, are, by no means, the concomitants of his sick-bed: every thing, through the assistance of his fellow-labourers and the direction of his superiors, goes on, and is attended to, in the same way, as if he were immediately on the spot: his grounds are worked; his stock raised; his fruits and products carried to market, by his family or connections; and as he is amply supplied with every

every necessary during his confinement, instead of being poorer, he comes out of his hospital a richer man than when he went in. When old age has rendered his farther exertions useless, it may be presumed, that some property has been acquired, and a situation of comfort established. — These he is allowed to enjoy unmolested, while the usual proportion of provisions and clothing are annually given to him. His children, and his children's children, his friends and former fellow-labourers; his countrymen, and fellow passengers, are all near him, and are all ready to administer their helps and consolation. In short, instead of wretchedness, and chilling penury, old age, in this state, often wears away, and snaps its slender thread, as gently, and perhaps as imperceptibly, as in any country whatever. It is a fact worthy of observation, that a Negro slave in the West Indies, has scarcely ever been heard to express a desire to return to his own country; nor, of the many who have obtained their freedom there, has one put it into practice: but, on the contrary, even newly imported Negroes, when threatened by the over-

feer, upon some fault or neglect of theirs, to be sent back again, are seriously alarmed at it.

To the eye of candor and moderation I address this picture of what does really exist. But to the prejudiced,—to those who are instigated to calumnies the most harsh, and proceedings the most unjust, upon the slightest grounds, I have nothing to offer, because I know that the opinions they have hastily adopted without any justifiable evidence, they will not quite so hastily give up. No persons are or can be so well informed of the facts I have before stated, as the planters and merchants resident, or who have resided in the West Indies, and in whose view they have passed. But the *abolitionists* very artfully endeavor to put aside every testimony of this sort, by insinuating, that they are interested parties, and therefore their evidence must be destitute of credibility. It is rather hard, that the testimony of many thousands of British subjects, among whom are men of unquestioned integrity and distinguished moral character, endued with as much virtue and honor as any other class
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of men in the world, should be less credible than that of hireling scriblers, profligate common sailors, and the scum of the people. But be it so; and then let us appeal for the truth to other witnesses;—to the governors, and other public officers, civil, military, and naval; who holding offices under the crown, have occasionally lived in the West Indian islands, and are undoubtedly competent to declare what they have observed. Let us also appeal to the acts of our colonial legislature, particularly *Jamaica*; where from the year 1781 to the present, the *General Assembly* have been framing and enacting a succession of laws, all calculated to meliorate the condition of their Negroes by gradual improvements. To have done less, would ill have accorded with their known humanity; but to have done more, would have brought no credit to their wisdom; for to anticipate those more enlarged privileges and franchises, which time and maturer civilization alone must gradually effectuate, would be folly, or rather frenzy in the extreme. The unexceptionable attestations of these laws, these governors, admirals, generals, and other officers of high rank and character,

character, we may very safely oppose to all the hearsay stories, paragraphs, essays, pamphlets and hand-bills, which the *abolitionists* can possibly scrape together, in support of their petitions to parliament.

There now only remains of the proposed plan of this short sketch, to point out briefly, what would be the probable, nay, the inevitable consequence of the surrender of a trade, which is the connecting medium of our foreign with our domestic commerce. If it were taken out of the chain, of which it composes so considerable a link, and upon which our manufactures so immediately depend, every improvement in the West Indian islands would immediately cease, and a diminution of the produce of the lands, now under cultivation there, would shortly follow. The export of British manufactures, which to Africa and the Colonies amount to nearly three millions sterling annually, would soon be reduced to nothing. The immense sums, owing to this country from the West Indies, would for ever remain unpaid; and innumerable bankruptcies would follow at home. From the inevitable decrease of the import of West Indian productions, there would

would be such a deficiency of the national revenue, as the imposition of fresh taxes, upon a people deprived of their accustomed resources of opulence and industry, could not possibly replace. If we should seek to replace this deficiency, by importing the products of the *Foreign* West Indian islands, —this indeed would be a truly national *felo de se*. A decay of public credit, and a depreciation of government securities, would ensue, from an inability to raise the public supplies. Our national importance would quickly decline, and be known to the next generation, only by the page of history. After so flagrant an act of oppression and impolicy, the merchants could no longer confide in government, for the continuation of those privileges which they had for ages enjoyed. This reflection would naturally throw a damp on all future enterprize, in every branch of foreign trade, as well as domestic manufacture; for, however the minds of some men may be inflamed at this moment, and however strenuous they may be in opposition to the African slave trade, there must a time come, when every Englishman, who is capable of reflecting at all, will weigh
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the injustice of this proceeding, abstracted from every consideration of feeling or policy; and will then perceive the instability of all commercial establishments in a country, where the mistaken zeal of a *few* could excite the legislature, so grossly to invade the rights of individuals. These and many other evils, must be reasonably expected from the *abolition* of a trade, which we *may* relinquish; but which *cannot* be taken from us, by the jealousy of foreign power: in this political self-murder we must be our own executioners.

To prevent these calamities, a bill is now framing, from local knowledge and practical experience; not a bill of mere theory and speculation, such as lately appeared, but a bill to obviate every reasonable complaint, and establish every necessary regulation in the African trade: and that such a bill may meet the approbation of every branch of the British legislature, and be passed into a law, ought to be the earnest wish of every patriotic Briton.

